Commentary

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Affirmative Action

Arch Puddington

Health Care

David Frum

Editing Commentary

A Valedictory

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The Americanization of the Holocaust / Alvin H. Rosenfeld

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What Moderate Feminists? / Carol Iannone

Claude Lanzmann and the IDF / Hillel Halkin

Books in Review: Gabriel Schoenfeld on Robert S. McNamara
Terry Teachout / Jay M. Harris / Mark Falcoff / Daniel Pipes

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NORMAN PODHORETZ

Thinker...Author...Editor

For thirty-five years, Norman Podhoretz has intrigued, offended, championed, irritated, confounded and delighted. In so doing, he has displayed the intellectual courage and editorial independence that have earned him the admiration and respect of friends and adversaries.

On the occasion of his retirement, we applaud his dedication and contributions to American political discourse and wish him continued success.

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Letters from Readers

Immigration

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Linda Chavez ["What To Do About Immigration," March] is never less than sensible, but . . . I feel she has not yet fully assimilated the new critique of immigration, despite her kind reference to my book, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster.**

For example, Miss Chavez repeats the standard immigration enthusiast's excuse that today's record immigration should be compared to total U.S. population, which is now much larger than it was at the turn of the century, when similar immigration last occurred. But, as I painstakingly point out in my book, the appropriate measure is immigration relative to population growth. Birth rates are now much lower than at the turn of the century, so the demographic impact is much greater. If current immigration continues, U.S. population will reach 390 million in 2050, of whom more than 130 million will be post-1970 immigrants and their descendants. But if there had been no immigration after 1970, U.S. population would stabilize in the range of 250 to 270 million. In effect, Washington is engaged in an enormous social-engineering project, second-guessing the collective result of private decisions made by individual American families.

And there is absolutely no economic rationale for this project. Here again Miss Chavez has not fully assimilated the work of George Borjas, an economist at the University of California-San Diego, who has demonstrated that the benefit to native-born Americans from the immigration of 1965 to 1990 is perhaps $6-$20 billion annually. Miss Chavez thinks this is significant, but Borjas also points out that it is a trivial amount in a seven-trillion-dollar economy—and is, incidentally, wiped out by his estimate of the fiscal loss from immigration, of which Miss Chavez seems unaware.

Miss Chavez says that I believe that American identity must be defined in racial terms. This sort of oversimplification is inevitable if one writes honestly about race in the current climate. Actually, I have made it clear that since a nation is an interlacing of ethnicity and culture, the assimilation of individuals is always possible. But the plain fact is that race is destiny in American politics. At the current rate, Washington's social engineering will result in American whites becoming a minority in the middle of the next century. This is a demographic transformation without precedent in the history of the world. No likely amount of intermarriage—which anyway seems now to be producing a yellow and white upper caste and a brown and black lower caste—can detract from its importance.

All sides in the immigration debate agree that policy-makers must answer three questions: how many immigrants? who should they be? how is immigration policy to be enforced? I believe it is extremely significant that Miss Chavez makes no effort at all to answer the first two questions. This shows that, like other immigration enthusiasts, she unthinkingly takes the status quo for granted. Yet there is nothing natural about the status quo; it is the result of policy accidents which can be put right. Particularly given the current systemic failure to assimilate the new immigrants, which Miss Chavez ably exposes, the question she and all immigration enthusiasts must answer is, why take the risk?

PETER BRIMELOW
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Linda Chavez's article contains much good sense. Her recommendations that our legal immigration policy should favor skilled and educated applicants and that newcomers should be encouraged to assimilate are longstanding objectives of many of those involved in the debate she has recently entered.

Unfortunately, her examination of illegal immigration is more than a little off the mark. While calling for better border control—a sensible if unremarkable suggestion—she asserts in passing that illegal immigrants already in the country should not be removed. While . . . a campaign like the ill-named Operation Wetback of the 1950's, with its mass round-ups, should have been managed better, does it make sense to allow an illegal immigrant to be home free once he is out of sight of the border?

* Reviewed by Peter Skerry in last month's COMMENTARY.—ED.

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What is more, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that of the more than 300,000 people who settle illegally in the United States each year, half enter legally—many as tourists or students or businessmen—and stay on after their entry permits expire. Better border control is irrelevant to this part of the illegal-immigration problem.

An essential tactic in stopping illegal immigration (especially by those who initially enter legally) is to cut off demand for their labor—i.e., a prohibition on employing illegal aliens. After all, is it right for a hapless peasant to be pursued for illegal residence while his American employer profits from his labor, risk free? Lest we forget, this was the situation in our country until the 1986 immigration law. Miss Chavez's improbable suggestion that we repeal employer sanctions would return us to the days of the Texas Proviso, the immigration-law loophole that was named for the agricultural interests that grew rich by exploiting illegal workers.

It is certainly true that employer sanctions have been less than an overwhelming success, but only half the policy was enacted in the 1986 law. The second half of employer sanctions is the establishment of a quick and easy, high-tech method for employers to verify a person's eligibility to work. This was recommended to the executive branch in the 1986 law, but never implemented.

The result has been widespread fraud, with packages of documents for sale today on the streets of Los Angeles for $30. Furthermore, employers have been put in the untenable position of having to scrutinize new employees' documents—if they look too hard, they may be accused of discrimination, but if they do not look hard enough, they may be accused of winking at a fraud.

Last fall, Barbara Jordan's bipartisan Commission on Immigration Reform unanimously recommended the speedy testing and implementation of an electronic-verification system to overcome these problems and help make employer sanctions viable. Whatever one's politics, it is more than a little far-fetched to imagine that the Jordan Commission would endorse a concept which Miss Chavez calls an infringement on our privacy, and which her fellow opponents of employer sanctions have labeled racist or totalitarian.

But Miss Chavez's most egregious oversight comes when she comments on the American underclass. She rightly lauds many immigrants' commitment to family, their work ethic, and their drive. Unfortunately, she seems to justify mass immigration by comparing these qualities to the presumed laziness, stupidity, and criminality of poor Americans.

The very real and grave problems of America's poor will not be solved by their rubbing shoulders with Salvadoran janitors or Cambodian doughnut-makers. In fact, quite the opposite has happened, as the violence between black Americans and immigrants in Miami, New York, and Los Angeles has shown. Most importantly, the mass immigration of unskilled workers in an age when there are fewer and fewer blue-collar jobs inevitably drives down wages and displaces poor American workers, especially black Americans.

Though I would not suggest that Miss Chavez is a racist, this attempt to avoid the problems of our black countrymen by importing foreigners is a sad theme that runs through our nation's history. As far back as 1871, even before the great wave of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, Frederick Douglass wrote:

> The former slaveowners of the South want cheap labor; they want it from Germany and from Ireland; they want it from China and Japan; they want it from anywhere in the world but from Africa. They want to be independent of their former slaves, and bring their noses to the grindstone.

Continuing a policy of mass immigration and refusing to do what is necessary to control illegal immigration are disservices to the most vulnerable of our fellow citizens and impede our efforts to grapple with the many economic, social, and other problems we face. The immigrant success stories and high rates of intermarriage Miss Chavez refers to are simply non sequiturs in the debate over crafting an immigration policy in the national interest.

MARK KRIKORIAN
Center for Immigration Studies
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Linda Chavez for her thoughtful and informative article. She is correct that it is

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long past time to repeal the bilingual-education programs and voting-rights laws which have had the effect of ghettoizing and dividing our nation. I also agree with her implication that, without the welfare state, we might have an immigration problem, but we would not have an immigration crisis.

Centralized government control of education has also greatly exacerbated the problem, facilitating the manipulation of young people by many who have axes to grind against traditional American civilization. As the grandchild of immigrants on both sides of my family, I am grateful for the fact that my mother's teachers treated her inability to speak English in the 1st grade as a challenge to be overcome, rather than as a form of cultural separatism to be reinforced.

Moreover, as one who gratefully acknowledges God's commandment that we be fruitful and multiply, I must separate myself from those who assert that overpopulation is a problem. America and the world are still blessed with an abundance of wide-open spaces—except to the degree that those spaces are placed off-limits by improper government ownership and regulation.

I also share Miss Chavez's opposition to employer sanctions as an improper infringement on the rights of employers and employees alike.

The core issue which must be addressed is citizenship and how it is to be obtained. Clearly, U.S. citizenship ought not be automatically conferred on the relatives of persons who have entered the United States illegally. Nor should that initial illegal act entitle anyone to stick his hands into the pockets of those who are already here in search of benefits and subsidies.

Miss Chavez is correct in suggesting that a constitutional amendment seems to be required to deal with the immigration crisis. To that end, the U.S. Taxpayers Alliance has proposed the Citizenship Taxpayer Protection Amendment:

> *Section 1.* . . . Citizens of the United States shall only be persons born of a mother who is either a citizen of one of the United States or of the District of Columbia, or who is lawfully present in and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and all persons who have been naturalized according to the laws of the United States.
>
> *Section 2.* Nothing in this Constitution shall require either the Congress or the States to provide payments or services to any person who is not a citizen of the United States.
>
> *Section 3.* No state, nor the District of Columbia, nor the government of the United States may confer citizenship on any person who is not conversant in the English language and who has not renounced citizenship in and allegiance to any other polity.
>
> *Section 4.* No person who is not a citizen shall vote in any election for Representative or Senator in Congress or to choose the President and Vice President of the United States.
>
> *Section 5.* The Enumeration which determines the apportionment of Representatives among the states shall be only of citizens.

In addition to the obvious benefits incident to declaring English to be our nation's official language, and precluding federal courts from requiring either Congress or the states to provide benefits, the proposal would return control over citizenship decisions to the state level—a procedure which obtained prior to the Fourteenth Amendment. Before Reconstruction, one became a citizen of the United States by virtue of first becoming a citizen of one of its constituent units. This concept of decentralization, diversity, and local control merits consideration once again.

In any event, it needs to be made clear that, while it is the duty of civil government to protect the God-given rights of every human being, it is not its obligation to grant seats on the board of directors to every person who crosses the border.

HOWARD PHILLIPS
U.S. Taxpayers Alliance
Vienna, Virginia

LINDA CHAVEZ writes:

Despite what my friend Peter Brimelow suggests, there are a number of reasons why the appropriate measure to use in evaluating immigration is not its relation to population growth. First, and most obviously, to restrict immigration whenever native-population growth is also declining could deprive the United States of new workers at the very time the economy needs them most. This might please anti-natalist groups which advocate zero or negative-population growth, but the experience of economies that have actually suffered population decline is not encouraging on that score. Many have resorted to guest-worker programs to fill the gap—an idea worth considering in the U.S., particularly if it would ease illegal immigration.

Second, Mr. Brimelow's concern that the descendants of post-1970's immigrants would make up one-third of a greatly increased U.S. population in 2050 is simply so much crystal-ball gazing. It is nearly impossible to predict future population growth with anything like the accuracy Mr. Brimelow—or the U.S. Census, for that matter—affects. The Malthusian projections popular among immigration restrictionists rarely take into account changes in fertility patterns that occur as immigrants and their children acquire education and affluence and intermarry.

On that point—intermarriage—Mr. Brimelow's skepticism is puzzling. Why will intermarriage produce a "yellow and white upper caste and a brown and black lower caste"? With the exception of fairly small numbers of mostly Caribbean Hispanics, who are frequently of mixed race themselves, there is little intermarriage between brown and black Americans. When Hispanics intermarry, as about one-third of young U.S.-born Hispanics do, they most often marry non-Hispanic whites. What is more, as my book, *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Poitics of Hispanic Assimilation*, shows, second- and third-generation Hispanics do quite well in this country, hardly occupying the position of a colored caste.

With regard to Mark Krikorian's point about illegal immigration: we certainly have the technological and enforcement abilities to root out illegal aliens, but I wonder whether we are truly prepared to pay the economic and social costs of such a policy. In my estimation, imposing a rather draconian national-worker registry upon the country—as Mr. Krikorian urges—would pointlessly burden the lives of most Americans without really solving the problem. The federal government should not monitor every single hiring

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decision made in the country—as a worker registry would require. I am ready to admit that our free and prosperous society will attract people whom we have not welcomed and do not want here. But unless they break other laws or become a burden on our welfare system—which we can already prevent if we choose to—I would rather expend our efforts and money intercepting them at the borders and deporting them when they run afoul of the law than setting up massive dragnets in our cities and towns.

Thanks to Howard Phillips for his kind letter. I must admit that I share his concerns about granting automatic citizenship to children born to illegal aliens and I welcome debate on the proposals he suggests.

The Children

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "WhatTo Do About the Children" [March], William J. Bennett has, I think, given as trenchant an account as it is possible to give of the moral quagmire engulfing American society. I believe he is entirely correct in allocating some responsibility to government policies—and in particular to those of the welfare state—in bringing us to our present sorry state. His proposals to correct those policies also deserve the highest consideration by Congress. But Mr. Bennett is also correct in saying that the primary cause of the moral crisis is not government, and will not be corrected even by the reforms he proposes.

As he well understands, there is an endemic moral relativism that dominates our universities, and that has spread from them to the entire educational establishment, at all levels. From there it has spread to leaders in the media, in business, law, and politics. Promiscuous behavior of all kinds—and not only that of the drug and welfare cultures—subsists largely upon the authority of the conviction that good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust are only "value judgments," matters of opinion. Among these, it is said, reason is unable to discriminate, so that what is called moral is no less arbitrary than what is called immoral. In such a regime the distinction between moral and immoral rapidly erodes. . . .

My recent book, *Original Intent and the Framers of the Constitution: A Disputed Question*, is, in part, an account of how moral relativism has replaced the principles of the Declaration of Independence as the foundation of an allegedly conservative constitutional jurisprudence. The philosopher-king of this new dispensation is the present Chief Justice of the United States, William Rehnquist. In a 1976 essay (reprinted in 1984) on "The Notion of a Living Constitution," he condemns those who

> ignore . . . the nature of political value judgments in a democratic society. If such a society adopts a constitution and incorporates in that constitution safeguards for individual liberty, these safeguards do indeed take on a generalized moral rightness or goodness. They assume a general social acceptance neither because of any intrinsic worth nor because of any unique origins in someone's idea of natural justice but instead simply because they have been incorporated in a constitution by the people.

To say that the "safeguards for individual liberty" in a constitution do not have "any intrinsic worth" means that individual liberty does not have any worth, which in turn means that human life does not have any intrinsic worth. It also means that the safeguards of slavery in the Constitution of 1787 have the identical moral standing as the safeguards of liberty, since they were incorporated into the same constitution by the same people. This doctrine of the equal right of slavery and freedom was also the doctrine of John C. Calhoun.

The foregoing is more than legal positivism, it is moral relativism subsisting upon a foundation of nihilism. It would be difficult to find a more concise and lucid example of the intellectual germ that has generated the moral plague Mr. Bennett has so well noted. It is true that Rehnquist is not responsible for spreading this disease, any more than Typhoid Mary was responsible for spreading typhoid. Throughout college and law school, he was undoubtedly surrounded by those who have repeated as a mantra that the only truth is the truth that all truth is relative. That the Declaration of Independence—and therewith the Constitution—enshrine an "abstract truth applicable to all men and all times," as Lincoln said, is as alien to him as colors to a blind man. . . .

Mr. Bennett has been an able diagnostician of the symptoms of the disease that is unraveling our social fabric. But diagnosis must lead to therapy. He must be prepared to wield the scalpel, however painful it may be. Lincoln also said, "Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right and part with him when he goes wrong."

There is no alternative to dealing forthrightly with the facts of our case, unless we are resigned to the illness becoming terminal.

Harry V. Jaffa
Claremont Institute
Claremont, California

To the Editor of Commentary:

As an anthropologist, I was startled to see William J. Bennett cite another anthropologist to the effect that the conditions we now confront in our own country approximate those of the traditional societies that our churches once sent missionaries to uplift. The plain fact is that the conditions Mr. Bennett discusses—random violence, widespread illegitimacy, and utter disregard for social sanctions—cannot be found in any traditional society anywhere in the world. The third-world social problems which inspired generations of missionaries had to do rather with (1) the traditional world view which in many cases tended to locate causation in human malevolence (thus engendering, for example, witchcraft accusations); and (2) the sharp distinction between "own" and "outsider" which permitted (or even prescribed) violence in relationships outside the community, however defined. (For some missionaries, the injustices traditionally borne by women provided further evidence of the need for enlightened education.)

Traditional societies, whatever their degree of apparently licentious or promiscuous behavior (e.g., on occasions of festival "inversion" of conventional norms), operate according to famously rigid rules of decorum. Illegitimacy is virtually nonexistent, either because women are married by the time of puberty (or closeted until marriage) or because legal and cultural mechanisms provide for the legitimation of any birth.

Economic and cultural influences from outside have in many

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cases resulted in the breakdown of traditional lines of authority and deference, creating the same sorts of problems that Mr. Bennett discusses. The parallel may be instructive for us, but not, certainly, as an index of how far we have fallen from civilization. The loss of traditional social structures represents as great a decline for a subsistence-farming village as for a world power.

CLARE WOLFOWITZ
Chevy Chase, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The tragic demise of the family, schools, and religious institutions during the last 30 years that William J. Bennett analyzes in his excellent article has had a profoundly damaging impact upon American Jewry. The erosion of society's support for the traditional values that are central to Judaism like marriage and the family, nurturing children, moral values including the sanctity of life, and personal sacrifices and service has contributed monumentally to shaping a younger generation that is largely alienated from its Jewish roots and values, and, therefore, very prone to assimilation into the decadent culture that typifies secular America.

To reverse this disastrous phenomenon will require massive Jewish educational outreach. . . . With this in mind, Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald created the National Jewish Outreach Program in 1987 for the purpose of liberating American Jews from the dungeon of Jewish ignorance and alienation from their deepest selves. . . .

[RABBI] SANFORD H. JARASHOW
Boca Raton, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

William J. Bennett is right on the mark in his thought-provoking policy guide. His favorable view of "the concept of orphanages or group-care homes" is especially relevant this year, the 100th anniversary of the birth of George Herman Ruth—the great Babe Ruth, considered by many the best baseball player in the history of the game.

The Babe's mother died when he was very young. His father, a saloon owner (there were no cocktail bars in those days), could not handle him. At the age of eight he was sent to a reform school, an institution liberals today look upon with as much abhorrence as they do orphanages. The Babe remained at St. Mary's Industrial School in Baltimore, a Catholic institution, for eleven years. At the school, every boy was taught a trade and engaged in some sport. The Babe was taught shirt-making and was the star catcher, shortstop, and pitcher on one of the school's several teams. His skill at baseball caught the kindly eye of Brother Mattias, who brought Ruth to the attention of the owner-manager of the Baltimore team, then in the triple-A International League. As a $600-a-year player he was sold to the Boston Red Sox, where he was an outstanding pitcher whose records still stand. The New York Yankees bought him from the cash-strapped Boston team. The Yankees recognized Ruth's hitting ability and switched him to left field where he could play and bat in every game. From then on he became the Bambino, the Sultan of Swat, the King of Clout—home-run hitter and baseball legend.

Although he was not exactly a model gentleman, the Babe was no worse than most ballplayers of the time, and he never forgot his roots. He helped raise money for St. Mary's and remained close to Brother Mattias. He loved children and was never too busy to sign an autograph or visit sick children. . . .

The point I wish to make, however, does not concern the Babe's hitting ability, but the fact that his success, as that of many other kids who were at St. Mary's, was due to an institution that took him off the streets and gave him guidance and care. I agree with Mr. Bennett that we would benefit from institutions like St. Mary's today.

ROBERT J. ROSENTHAL
Washington, D.C.

WILLIAM J. BENNETT writes:

I appreciate Harry V. Jaffa's letter and agree with much of what he says. Intelligent public policies can have an impact on America's social pathologies, and we should obviously do what we can. But legislation can do very little about the influence of moral relativism. There will be no cultural regeneration until we address the moral "root causes" of our problems.

Mr. Jaffa is right in pointing out the enormous damage universities and intellectuals have wrought. Although the worst aspects of their ideas are usually diluted, what

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many intellectuals advocate (i.e., open marriage, values clarification, sexual liberation) eventually does spread to the rest of society. And once the virus is unleashed, many people suffer, and none more than the poor, with whom intellectuals, ironically enough, so often express solidarity.

As for "wield[ing] the scalpel," what does Mr. Jaffa mean by "scalpel," and who is to wield it against what? The solution to most of what ails us is to grow more civilized and become more responsible. Moral recovery can come only from the American people and our character-forming institutions. That, at least, was the vision of the Founders, who argued that a self-governing people must control its appetites, passions, and self-indulgences if liberty and democracy are to survive.

I think Clare Wolfowitz has confused an argument by analogy with an argument by identity. My point was not that 19th-century "primitive" societies were plagued with the same problems we face; rather, things have come to such a pass in America and there is so much suffering that it should arouse sentiments similar to those which once inspired others to cross oceans bringing solace and enlightenment. Culturally speaking, we are entering uncharted waters, which makes our situation both unique and alarming. But I would also be wary of romanticizing the "rigid rules of decorum" of "traditional societies." Surely many of them are inconsistent with what we would consider to be a good and decent social order.

The alienation to which Rabbi Sanford H. Jarashow refers is all too real, and it is encouraging to hear about voluntary organizations like the National Jewish Outreach Program and its educational efforts. This is an example of Burke's "little platoons" accomplishing what government initiatives simply cannot do.

I appreciate Robert J. Rosenthal's letter. Comfortably removed from the realities of inner-city life, some liberals have taken easy shots at institutions which are, as it happens, doing the Lord's work. No one has ever argued that orphanages or similar institutions are the solution to all our problems. But orphanages can make a tremendous positive difference in the lives of young children who have been neglected, abused, and abandoned. I know; I have been to these institutions and I have seen their work. Nor do they have to produce another Hall of Fame baseball player to be considered a success. I would settle for some love, discipline, protection, and basic sustenance. That is a good deal more than many inner-city children can now look forward to.

The Peace Process

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan, in his incisive analysis of the peace process ["If This Be Peace . . . ," February], correctly states that it is "naive to suppose that the Arab-Israeli conflict can be reduced to economic terms.". . . He rightly observes that "the religiously and nationalistically inspired intolerance in the Arab world of Israel's existence does not stem from economic hardship." But this does not refute the extensive evidence (cited in *Intifada* by Ehud Yaari and Ze'ev Schiff) that economic hardship greatly aggravated such intolerance and gave it a lethal edge. . . . Nor does it mean that poverty and ignorance are not fertile ground for the "intellectuals, professionals, and teachers" who are the leaders of Hamas to sow their seeds of hatred. Though most of these leaders might not be from disadvantaged backgrounds, most of their troops are. . . .

Altogether, who is disadvantaged and who is not is a relative rather than an absolute matter. The phenomenal rise in the standard of living of the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza as a result of the Israeli occupation created great social dislocations. Improved agricultural techniques and productivity made many rural workers redundant and . . . they joined the ranks of Arabs seeking employment in Israel. Despite the fact that they earned more money in Israel, for the most part they were employed in menial tasks and were not always treated humanely. At the same time, rapid economic growth generated by Israel in the territories made possible the opening of seven new universities in the West Bank. . . .

The Israeli economic system, highly politicized and rife with monopolies and unbelievable bureaucratic harassment, makes life miserable even for ordinary Israelis and certainly for entrepreneurs. It also imposed draconian economic measures on the territories, paralyzing economic life and preventing Arab entrepreneurs from developing businesses or industry. As a result, politics became the only field in which a new class of better-educated Arabs could participate. . . .

Economic obstacles and incentives had other far-reaching political consequences. As Arab workers in Israel started earning more than intellectuals, the latter became embittered and blamed Israel for the decline in their status. Young Arabs working in Israel also started earning more than their elders, and this, combined with increased exposure to permissive Israeli mores, led to a crumbling of the old patriarchal order of the Arab village. This in turn eventually led to a religious and nationalistic backlash and to the growing appeal of fundamentalism.

In general, exposure to Israel raised the level of expectation among Arabs enormously. When many of these expectations could not be realized and the situation started deteriorating economically, partly for objective reasons (a recession in Israel and in the oil-producing Arab states where many Palestinians worked) and partly because of gratuitous Israeli economic oppression, the ground was set, after over two decades of Arab acquiescence in the occupation, for a popular revolt. As studies cited by Yaari and Schiff dramatically show, Arab detainees in the first year of the *intifada* joined the riots for economic rather than nationalistic reasons. Yasir Arafat and the PLO then exploited the wave of spontaneous protest and made sure that the revolt spread and continued.

Mr. Bar-Illan's contention that the miserable conditions in Gaza cannot "be blamed for Islamic militancy" since such militancy "plagues the Muslim world from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean" does not take account of the fact that the centralized state-run economies of all Arab nations have created growing economic hardship, even in the wealthy oil-producing states. As the economies of all Muslim states deteriorate, and as the gap grows between rising expectations and a miserable reality, between the extremely wealthy and the poor, Islamic militancy grows, as has happened in . . . Algeria.

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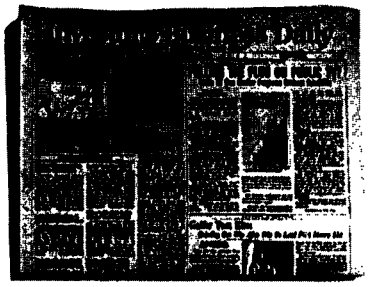

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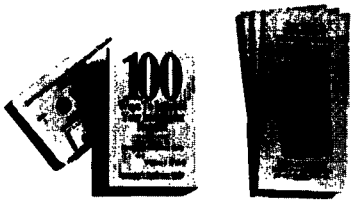

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Mr. Bar-Illan is right, of course, in stating that the remedy for such economic deterioration does not lie in the grandiose plans suggested by the likes of Shimon Peres or by aid indiscriminately poured into the Palestinian Authority. In fact, as in Africa and Latin America, such aid to political entities can actually make matters worse. . . . In poverty-stricken Gaza, for example, United Nations refugee aid was such an economic plum that 600,000 of its 750,000 inhabitants registered as refugees and chose to remain so, fearing the loss of their benefits. . . . The culture of dependency and enforced idleness which welfare perpetuated in Gaza has had momentous political consequences. Sixty percent of the population there is under 19, and 25 percent between 20 and 35. Many of the young are unemployed or lack the skills to gain employment except in the most menial, low-paying jobs. Enlisting in one of the well-funded fundamentalist groups assures them a steady source of income and an avenue for upward mobility. . . .

Creating a more prosperous economy by lifting restrictions could contribute to the growth of a sorely lacking middle class among the Arabs. It might not completely resolve the conflict between Israelis and Arabs but it certainly might mitigate it. The fact is that Jerusalem, the focus of the strongest nationalist and religious emotions, where Jews and Arabs live in close proximity and intermingle extensively (at least on the Jewish side), has been less affected by the *intifada* than other areas in the territories because extensive commerce (especially tourism) has raised the Arab standard of living and provided a strong incentive to keep the city relatively peaceful. . . .

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a complex one, as Mr. Bar-Illan documents. Yet unless the two communities are completely separated, which seems impossible, a way must be found to reduce the tensions between them slowly and gradually. This can be accomplished only if the two peoples develop a common stake in coexistence. Only then can solutions evolve that now seem impossible. The benefits of economic cooperation have made what were once ferocious and implacable historic enemies, like France and Germany, choose to live in peace. Given time, and a proper economic climate, which it is in Israel's power to establish, it is not unreasonable to hope that a similar process might profoundly alter relations between Arabs and Jews, as, indeed, it has already started doing in many ways.

DANIEL DORON
Israel Center for Social and
Economic Progress
Jerusalem, Israel

DAVID BAR-ILLAN WRITES:

As an advocate of a free-market economy, I cannot take issue with Daniel Doron's recommendations, but his notion that economic improvement created by "lifting restrictions" can "profoundly alter relations between Arabs and Jews" is unsupportable. It is the flip side of the bankrupt Marxist dogma which posits that peace and harmony among peoples can be achieved through "economic democracy." Both are panaceas, and both ignore the myriad factors which make economic improvement irrelevant to the bitterness of the confrontation.

Relying on Ya'ari and Schiff, Mr. Doron asserts that the *intifada* began as a result of economic hardship. But even he admits to "the rapid economic growth generated by Israel in the territories." In fact, he grossly understates the case. The pre-*intifada* economic growth in the territories was one of the most spectacular anywhere in the world. It not only "made possible the opening of seven new universities in the West Bank" (where none had existed before), but created an explosion of wealth among the Arab inhabitants. (Somehow, all this happened despite what Mr. Doron describes as "gratuitous Israeli economic oppression" and "draconian economic measures . . . paralyzing economic life.")

As a result of this growth, expectations were raised, a new class of rich businessmen was created, traditional family structures were undermined, Western cultural and political influences raged, and the universities and mosques bred revolutionary ideas and virulent anti-Israel incitement. Surely Mr. Doron cannot seriously believe that Palestinian intellectuals turned against Israel because they (allegedly) earned less than Palestinian laborers. The whole Arab intellectual and professional class in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and other Arab countries is venomously anti-Israel.

A case can more easily be made for the opposite proposition: that economic betterment brings trouble. In the nineteen years of Jordanian rule (1948-67), the only growth industry in the territories was poverty. One-third of the population emigrated. There was no *intifada*, no Palestinian-liberation talk, and no clamor for independence.

Nor is it true that Islamic militancy is bred by economic hardship. The case of Iran should have made this clear. Under the Shah, Iran was a wealthy country whose economy was far less centralized than most Islamic states. Yet the Shah was overthrown, and Iran became the fountainhead of Islamic militancy. Mr. Doron ascribes the growth of this militancy to the gap between "rising expectations and a miserable reality, between the extremely wealthy and the poor." Yet if every country in which such conditions existed bred suicide bombers, the world would be one large killing field.

Even if all the funds Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres hopes to raise for the Palestinian Authority materialize, and all were invested wisely in job-generating, privately-owned businesses, the most one could expect is that the Palestinians in the territories would reach the standard of living and entrepreneurial freedom of Arab-Americans. But as Mr. Doron must know, nowhere is there more militant anti-Israel, fundamentalist, and nationalistic activity than among certain sectors of Arab-Americans.

Arab nationalism and Muslim militancy are interrelated passions sweeping the whole Arab world. They are animated by numerous historic factors, not least of which are an irrational fear of the West and an abiding hostility to Western culture exacerbated by a monumental inferiority complex. Israel, sovereign in a land once ruled by Islam, is a particularly irritating representative of the West. It has also exacerbated the Arab inferiority complex by regularly beating Arab armies in war. To believe that such a conflict can be ameliorated, let alone resolved, by removing bureaucratic restrictions from Palestinian entrepreneurs and raising the standard of living in Gaza is to apply Western rationalism to the Middle Eastern psyche, thus repeating the most common mistake Western Arabists make.

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Clinton's Foreign Policy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joshua Muravchik ["Clintonism Abroad," February] deplores President Clinton's irresolution in matters of foreign policy, citing Bosnia, China, and North Korea as cases in point. True enough, but what Mr. Muravchik scants, in my view, is that the American people at present want to take as few risks abroad as possible (and preferably none) unless they perceive a direct threat to American interests. That is why there has never been any real support for active U.S. involvement in Bosnia, for example, whether under U.S. or UN auspices. Also witness Somalia, where a cluster of casualties brought Bob Dole and other Republicans rushing to the floor to denounce the UN and demand a pull-out. . . .

Whatever the merits or demerits of the administration's policy, it has to work within the context of what I believe one is justified to call a quasi-isolationist climate. These circumstances should be given due weight in any assessment of its actions.

ALLAN S. NANES
Simi Valley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Joshua Muravchik's anti-Clinton agenda robs his article of balance and objectivity. Nowhere is it so marked as in the penultimate paragraph accusing Clinton of having

> taken a good situation and made the least of it, squandering a time of unparalleled American preeminence that might have been used to bolster our security and improve the prospects of world peace.

For me the jury is still out on Bill Clinton. He inherited one of the worst situations any President has had to contend with. Before the Soviet break-up there was essentially a stand-off between East and West, and the cold-war Presidents, except for the Middle East conflict, could concentrate their energies on thwarting Soviet ambitions. The internecine warfare and nationalistic disputes currently raging worldwide were obscured by the larger confrontation. Nowadays our efforts are, of necessity, diffused, and I defy any would-be American leader to generate a cohesive world strategy. Conservative critics like Mr. Muravchik find it easy to snipe at Clinton as irreso-

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Whose city—whose "holy city" is it?

It's twenty-eight years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, that the city of Jerusalem has been reunited under Israeli rule. It was understood that Jerusalem was Israel's undivided capital. But now, in the context of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians—unwittingly buoyed by the accomodating attitude of the current Israeli government—the status of Jerusalem has once more become the object of discussion.

What are the facts?

A city of many nationalities. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Jews and Moslems) with its two mosques. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Jews and Christians, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to those in the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina—cities that no "infidel" may visit.

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years."

A tenuous Moslem claim. It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. All Israeli governments, in their constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, have largely acceded to this tradition and have put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. They have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city" and the capital of their proposed state. And it would be an insult to all Moslems to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

Jerusalem: never an Arab capital. But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus—has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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lute, but I am inclined to wonder what they would label as resolute, since they are notoriously silent on the thorny foreign-policy problems confronting us. I search in vain for responsible alternatives on their part that a disillusioned American public might applaud.

The truth is that we are simply no longer able to control world events, and will probably never be able to do so again. To put it bluntly, we can no longer afford to attempt such control. The tidal-wave increase in defense spending of the last fifteen years coupled with the rising burden of entitlements has brought our national debt to a point where adding the now rapidly compounding interest consumes two-thirds of our annual revenue, leaving one-third for domestic and foreign-policy needs—precious dollars indeed. And here comes Mr. Muravchik, who would have us spend a good many of these remaining dollars on some vague hopes we can pressure others to yield to our concepts of world order. He must know we have but faint hopes of engineering any permanent solutions to the intractable problems created for us by intractable opponents of this world order, but he wants somebody—I presume with right-wing credentials—to do something. And, of course, to do it resolutely.

We have tried such engineering, including the military option, for decades now, and achieved sorrowfully limited success. Beginning with the Vietnam era our box score in lasting beneficial results around the planet should sober us, and the cost in dollars and young lives should stagger us. But in the world according to Mr. Muravchik, since we are the sole remaining superpower, it is mandatory we make other nations tremble.

In the end I am convinced that nations will have to solve their own problems, and, sadly, many thousands will have to die during the convulsions attending them. If our admonitions, threats, and sanctions ease their convulsions we will perform them in the name of foreign policy; but overt action—ah—! Rereading the late J. William Fulbright might be instructive, particularly his warning as to how previous world powers "lost their preeminence because of a failure to recognize their limitations—the arrogance of power." His hope was "that this country may learn by the mistakes of its predecessors."

There is no foreign policy—no economic sanctions—no cajoling—no reasoning—no diplomatic maneuvering—that will deter a rogue nation from evil actions indefinitely. There are infinite ways open to any one of them, given enough economic clout and determination, eventually to develop nuclear weapons. The only defense will be the assured destruction of a nation insane enough to use them.

I for one am happy that Bill Clinton has concentrated less on foreign than on domestic policy. To gain the backing of the electorate on decisions affecting foreign affairs requires setting our economic house in order. If this is isolationism, serve me a big helping.

STANLEY P. KESSEL
Hollywood, Florida

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

Allan S. Nanes makes a strong point about the isolationist political climate, which is neatly illustrated by Stanley P. Kessel's screed. Still, he omits the impact of presidential leadership. Americans follow rather than lead their Presidents into international action. This was true in both world wars, the cold war, Korea, Vietnam, and, most recently, Desert Storm. In the last case, public-opinion polls suggested great reluctance to take forceful action until President Bush rallied the nation to his policy. Although Presidents do not have carte blanche, they are not merely prisoners of the climate of opinion: they have power to influence it. The real question, then, is whether the President has combated or abetted the isolationist mood. Clinton has abetted it by projecting an image of America's role as being little more than the most generous member of the United Nations, because, as he explained, "We've simply got to focus on rebuilding America."

As Mr. Kessel sees it, Clinton "inherited one of the worst situations" because, before now, other "disputes . . . were obscured by" the cold war. This is akin to saying that a person who has just fought off a life-threatening illness is worse now because he might have to deal with a host of lesser problems that he ignored while his life was in danger.

I have been called many things, but never "notoriously silent." For Mr. Kessel's sake, I offer this short list of foreign-policy alternatives to Clinton policies: arm the Bosnian government and support it with air power; cease the search for "moderates" among Islamic extremists and work for the downfall of the regime in Teheran; launch a robust Radio Free Asia to strengthen China's democrats; lay the groundwork for the use of force to abort Pyongyang's nuclear program since the current "framework agreement" will surely fail unless the North Korean regime falls; proceed with the expansion of NATO; cease the evisceration of America's military forces and restore a robust program for defending the country against weapons of mass destruction.

As for defense increases, the only "tidal wave" is Mr. Kessel's rhetoric, which threatens to submerge the facts. During the fifteen years he refers to, defense spending consumed 5.6 percent of our GDP. During the previous fifteen years it consumed 6.3 percent.

Mr. Kessel scorns the "sorrowfully limited success" of America's foreign and defense policies. Well, in the cold war, we won a total victory against the most lethal military force ever built without having to fight a frontal war. I only wish my own life consisted of such sorrowfully limited successes.

Personal & Political

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I suppose that, sooner or later, I was bound to get a review of *Democracy on Trial* written by a critic who remains smitten with the 1960's. Imagine my surprise that the reviewer, Adam Wolfson, is a conservative and that the review appeared in COMMENTARY [Books in Review, April], a journal to which I have subscribed for a number of years. Mr. Wolfson is rather like the U.S. State Department: the Soviet Union has fallen, oh dear, what are we to do? Thus, Mr. Wolfson: the 60's are over, oh dear, what am I to do? And the answer, of course, is that Mr. Wolfson keeps the 60's—or his version of them—alive and well by cataloguing with great care all their many "grotesqueries." That unmistakable *frisson* at the mention of the word "Dylan." That delicious adrenalin rush at the sound "Beatles." Ah, what dangerous folks they were, and are, in Mr. Wolfson's supercharged world.

The odd thing, of course, is that no Kennedy or John Lennon or

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Bob Dylan or any other 60's icon, save for Martin Luther King, appears in *Democracy on Trial*, although I yield to none in my undying affection for Dylan and the Beatles. Reading the book through paisley-colored lenses, Mr. Wolfson seems to have missed my references—and indebtedness—to Jefferson, Lincoln, Tocqueville, Arendt, Havel, Willa Cather, Richard Rodriguez, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Reinhold Niebuhr, Thomas and Mary Edsall, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John of Salisbury (that 12th-century hippie), and John Paul II (perhaps, unbeknownst to me, John Paul spent part of the 60's in a commune).

But, all in all, Mr. Wolfson is really a bit of a tease. Lest anyone rush out to buy the book panting for a megadose of 60's counterculturalism, I should offer a few bits of truth in advertising. Frank Rich of the *New York Times* appears in the preface, where I use his rueful comments on the passing of Richard Nixon as an opening to bid farewell to one of my own hangovers, called "hating Nixon." I decided it was time to bid adieu to a hate that came too easily—reserving room, of course, for a robust critique, but that is something else. How strange, therefore, that this should be taken by Mr. Wolfson as an act of nostalgia. Christopher Hitchens is drawn in by me in order to show there is disagreement on the Left about speech codes; Cornel West to remind us that we must not throw out the early democratic baby with the slavery bathwater; etc.

But enough. Given that the entire focus of my work—from beginning to end—has been an argument against self-absorption; given that the use of journal material Mr. Wolfson finds offensive appears in another book entirely (*Women and War*) as part of a narrative play on first-person accounts by soldiers; given that the mention of "consciousness raising" appears in yet another book's acknowledgments (*Public Man, Private Woman*, first published in 1981) and is accompanied by an account of the attack by some feminists on what other feminists had to say as part of the process—as if there were only one way to "raise consciousness"—and, moreover, that a single mention or two of consciousness-raising in a book of over 300 pages seems scarcely "ostentatious," I am left with a real puzzler: who is this "Elshtain" about whom Mr. Wolfson writes?

Whatever Mr. Wolfson may have been doing in the 1960's, I was primarily engaged in raising babies and going to school. Self-absorption was never an option. I missed out on that one. And, since Mr. Wolfson suggests a passing familiarity with my *oeuvre*, he surely recollects my lament in *Women and War* that there was all too much war-likeness in the antiwar movement. But, above all, it is an act of massive bad faith (or egregious misreading) for him to saddle me with a position I have spent my entire adult life criticizing, whether propounded by giants in the canon of Western political thought or contemporary feminists, namely, the view that family relations are "purely instrumental" and are to be made "subservient to the ends of the *polis*"—or to a movement of any kind. This goes entirely against the grain of my published work—which runs to thousands of pages by now—and, I should add, my life and the way I live it. I would refer the interested reader to the discussion of the chastening of patriotism in *Women and War* and the sketch of an "ethical polity" in *Public Man, Private Woman* or, for that matter, the argument against pitiless revolutionaries in *Democracy on Trial*.

Mr. Wolfson accuses me of "inadvertently" holding hands with writers in the "politics-of-difference" school. This is ludicrous and carried out through sleight-of-hand. On Mr. Wolfson's view, if one disagrees—as do I—that Thomas Hobbes should be located as one of the "founders of modern liberal democracy," one by definition joins hands with all who disdain "negative liberty" and individual rights. This is scarcely fair play or decent logic, to say the least, and it serves only one purpose: to perpetuate the dismal state of our political discourse by driving wedges where no insurmountable barriers to a culture of democratic argument need exist. Thus Mr. Wolfson's suggestion that "Elshtain," as youth and adult, remains "too alienated from the sources of American democracy to be a helpful guide to their rehabilitation" is a *coup de grâce* that follows from his own flawed logic rather than from my argument.

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Perhaps there is not much I, or anyone else, can do by way of rehabilitating our democracy. But "Elshtain" as a fifteen-year-old youth named Jean Bethke wrote an essay for a 4-H Club speech contest on "What America Means to Me." Lincoln was in there, I recall, but mostly my speech was a paean of love and appreciation to a country to which I quite readily pledged civic allegiance as a faithful if, at times, critical citizen.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN
Nashville, Tennessee

ADAM WOLFSON writes:

In her book, *Democracy on Trial*, Jean Bethke Elshtain warns against a form of political discourse prevalent on the Left that would reduce the political to the personal. Further, she urges that we "reach out once more to our fellow citizens from a stance of good will and work to defuse our discontents." I guess that does not include me. Her response to my review is nothing more than a hysterical attack, accusing me of being a "tease" and of loathing hippies and rock music, and demanding to know where I was in the 1960's. (Incidentally, I never said that all the 60's "icons" I named appeared in *Democracy on Trial*, only that they were sprinkled throughout Mrs. Elshtain's work.)

I will not respond to her accusations in kind, for, as I made clear in my review, I happen to agree with her that the politics of "rage" (as she has labeled it) is hardly conducive to a healthy exchange of ideas, or even bare civility. Were she to revisit my review, she would also notice that I commend her for "the many sharp and true things she has to say about our current troubles," namely, her proper concern over the disintegration of America's civil society and the anti-democratic nature of the politics of many feminists and multiculturalists. However, as I argue in my review, and as her letter amply illustrates, she remains deeply misguided on these important issues.

Since she does not respond to the points I raised in my review, allow me to repeat why her book is so disappointing. The basic problem is that Mrs. Elshtain remains entranced by the left-wing ideological assault on liberal democracies. Thus, for example, her welcome critique of identity politics is crippled by her belief that the feminist move to politicize the private *was* "exciting and transformative," as well as by her belief that liberal tolerance needs to be supplanted by a substantive recognition of difference.

Mrs. Elshtain complains that I have saddled her with the view that family relations are to be made subservient to the ends of the *polis*, a view she claims she has spent her entire life criticizing. I wrote nothing of the kind. In fact, I praised her for "unrelentingly" criticizing the radical wing of the feminist movement, which tends to hold views hostile to the traditional family. What I did observe was that, in her search for solutions to the breakdown of civil society, she turns for the most part not to sources within the liberal tradition (of which, in many of her works, she is quite critical) but, oddly, to Pericles (no great defender of the bourgeois family). Further, she calls for a "new social covenant" and asks that "government . . . find a way to respond to people's deepest concerns." She does not seem to realize that this sort of mindset, which became prevalent in the 1960's, is itself partly responsible for the decline of liberal-democratic civil society.

Mrs. Elshtain concludes her diatribe by expressing pessimism as to the prospects of rehabilitating our democracy. This is, of course, the important question. Yet for her the salient political questions characteristically get tangled up with her life story, providing another example of how for her the personal is political after all. Thus, we learn that in the 1960's she was busy "raising babies and going to school," and that "a fifteen-year-old youth named Jean Bethke" wrote a speech that was a "paean of love and appreciation" to America. I commend her for these sentiments, but wish that she would heed the advice she so glibly offers in her book to others: "If there are no distinctions between public and private, personal and political, . . . genuine politics ceases to exist," leaving only "pervasive force, coercion, and manipulation." Words to live up to.

"Victim Art"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Terry Teachout's endorsement of Arlene Croce's (in)famous article in the *New Yorker* ["Victim Art," March], sev-

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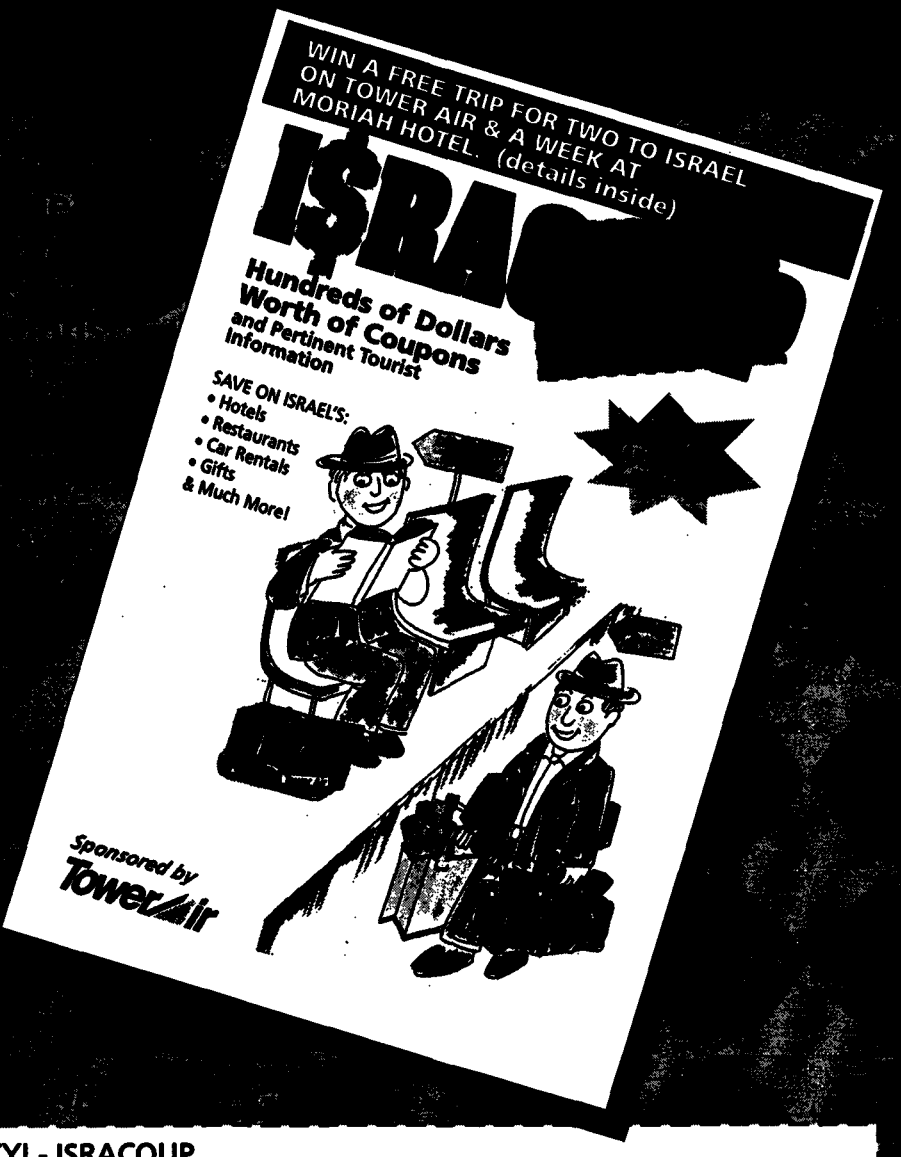

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eral questions which had been nagging me finally crystallized: Is there a distinction between "victim art" and documentaries of victims? What is "art for art's sake"? What is meant by "political art"?

The first question is of primary importance because *Still/Here*, the Bill T. Jones dance piece at the heart of the furor, incorporated videotape of real people talking about their life-threatening afflictions. It seems clear to me that what Croce objects to most is the inclusion of documentary footage; the use of these people and their stories is what places Jones's piece beyond criticism, because who can criticize a cancer victim's portrayal of her condition? And yet, many victims have had their stories made into vital art. Surely there is a difference between a videotaped testimonial of a syphilis victim and a performance of Ibsen's *Ghosts*; between an interview with a stroke victim and Arthur Kopit's *Wings*; between a Holocaust testimonial and *Schindler's List*.

But perhaps this distinction is too complex for Mr. Teachout, who hankers for an autonomous art, free from "politicization." What confuses me is the insistence by many today, especially by those who are comfortable enough with themselves and their livelihood to have no ax to grind, on "art for art's sake." Such a vague phrase is hard to trace, but the farther one goes into the history of art, especially performed art, the less sense it makes. Whether one investigates the origins of the theater and dance in religion, or of painting in history-telling, the occurrence of art free from explicit ties to politics is unusual. From the annual, government-sponsored festivals of drama in ancient Greece, to the royal patronage of composers and artists in Europe, to the performance of Balinese ritual theater, art has everywhere, always, had something to do with politics.

Of course, our understanding of the "political" is what ultimately trips up discussions of political art. Those who see political art as that which relates directly to questions of government or to current events may watch most ballets or plays without feeling the need to think. . . . Good for them. But for those who believe that all relationships among human beings involve politics and scales of power and submission and, therefore, that all art is political, the primary concern will be the power of the presentation of those relationships. . . .

Finally, about the so-called politically-correct understanding that to criticize and censure a work of art without seeing it is oppressive: it is. The roots of oppression, whether of Jews, women, or art, lie in the suppression of the unknown. Though Croce might have felt that she already knew what the piece would be "about," she didn't and it is wrong of her to write about something she had little knowledge of. I am thankful, however, that she presented such a wide target for those of us who have always believed art to be linked to human life, both to the victors and to the victims.

JON SHERMAN
Washington, D.C.

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

In declaring that "all relationships among human beings involve politics and scales of power and submission and, therefore, that all art is political," Jon Sherman reveals himself to be a member of the congregation to which Bill T. Jones and his ilk are preaching. I wholeheartedly encourage them to start a support group—so long as they don't ask me to help them rent the hall.

Imaginary & Other Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although I have not read the story by Paul Goodman described in Herb Greer's fine and thoughtful article, "An Amateur Jew" [March], its theme is strikingly similar to that of John Berryman's "The Imaginary Jew," a story based on an unpleasant experience Berryman once had in Union Square, in which he was mistaken for and persecuted as a Jew by a right-wing lout.

One difference between the story Mr. Greer describes and Berryman's is that Berryman (or his protagonist-narrator, who is largely a stand-in for himself) is trying not to defend a particular Jew but to defend his own political principles and to establish a measure of historical truth. Another difference is that Berryman does not give ground to his persecutor, an Irishman, but only accepts his Jewishness, metaphorically speaking, a few days after the incident. . . .

There must be a whole genre of literature devoted to this theme of mistaken identity as well as a complementary genre which would include, for example, *Daniel Deronda*, in which the mistake turns out to be true. Herb Greer's piece, though nonfiction, manages to straddle both genres and would be an admirable addition to either.

ROBERT KORNFELD
Chicago, Illinois

HERB GREER writes:

I do not remember reading the Berryman story, but I have looked at it now, and again read the Goodman piece, "The Facts of Life." Neither quite fits my description, but both deal in different ways with the experience I tried to explore. My memory had to reach back a few decades, to when I more or less lived in the British Museum reading room for two years and plowed through enormous amounts of material, including issues of the *Kenyon Review*, where Berryman's story first appeared. I might have conflated the two, favoring Goodman in my memory because his story was in the same anthology (*New Directions 13*) as some rather bad adolescent poetry of mine.

In any event, I was dead chuffed, as they say in Britain, by Mr. Kornfeld's very kind and graceful compliment on my piece, and I hope this explanation won't spoil it for him.

"Juries on Trial"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard A. Posner's views ["Juries on Trial," March] on the role of trial by jury and how juries should be handled by trial judges are, I believe, consistent with the experiences of most federal judges. There is an ingredient to trial by jury which he omits, however, and which is not well understood or practiced by most judges, state and federal, trial and appellate. Justice Horace Gray in 1899 said it best in *Capitol Traction Co.* v. *Hof*, a United States Supreme Court decision reported at 174 U.S. 1:

> "Trial by jury" in the primary and usual sense of the term at the common law and in the American Constitution . . . is a trial by a jury of twelve men, in the presence and under the superintendence of a judge empowered to instruct them on the law and to advise them on

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facts, and (except on acquittal of a criminal charge) to set aside their verdict if in his opinion it is against the law or the evidence.

If more judges exercised the authority Justice Gray described, many fewer "astonishing verdicts," in Judge Posner's words, would stand and there would be considerably less for Messrs. Abramson and Adler, whose books he reviews, to write about.

AVERN COHN
District Judge
United States District Court
Detroit, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard A. Posner's article on the modern American jury is based on an internal contradiction. On the one hand, he concludes that as more and more judges climb the lengthening career ladder over a period of years, and as the judiciary thus becomes more dependably and predictably professional, the need for lay juries will diminish. Yet at the outset of his article he acknowledges the increasingly low professional quality and rampant politicization of many state judiciaries. I am considerably less sanguine than Judge Posner is about the prospects of low-quality politicized judges remaining on the bench for longer times. That prospect brings to mind the old saw that some people have a dozen years' experience while others have two years' experience six times over. One would think that a bench populated by long-entrenched but somewhat less than competent jurists would serve to intensify rather than diminish the need for effective juries.

Though Judge Posner understandably holds federal judges in higher regard than their state counterparts, the fact is that the federal judiciary, too, has become politicized, so that result-orientation is increasingly the dominant theme of judicial decision-making. It is no secret that presidential and senatorial campaigns are waged these days with promises about what kind of judges the candidate means to see appointed to the bench, if elected. This appears to be one area of politics in which the candidates' promises are kept.

Ideas do indeed have consequences. When Earl Warren legitimized avowed judicial result-orientation with his famous (and at the time widely cheered) technique of brushing aside closely reasoned legal arguments with the rhetorical question "Yes, but is it fair?," he set in motion a process that over the years has trickled down the judicial pyramid so that these days even inferior court judges at the lowest levels think of themselves as heirs to the mantle of King Solomon. As practicing lawyers know, one cannot go to court secure in the knowledge that the judge will predictably apply and enforce even the most basic rules of law. Each experienced lawyer has a collection of judicial rulings that would make a law student blush. It is this phenomenon that inspires much of today's burgeoning litigation, . . . everything is worth a try because the "law" all too often takes a back seat to the judge's ideological, philosophical, or just plain personal predilections.

Add to that the crushing caseloads that result from drug-offense prosecutions (among other factors), and the desirability of trying one's case before a harried and somewhat less than brilliant judge rather than a jury diminishes rapidly. At least the jurors bring to the problem a set of twelve (or six) different perspectives and biases, so that some of them tend to cancel one another out. . . .

And so juries should be cherished and nurtured. Indeed, jury duty should be made a serious civic obligation from which one should not be excused absent truly serious personal hardship. . . .

GIDEON KANNER
Loyola Law School
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In hopes of reducing the burdensome length and often horrific outcomes of jury trials, Richard A. Posner proposes that in civil cases judges should have the discretion to decide whether or not a jury should hear a case.

Though juries take a great deal of time and expense, many judges would still choose to conduct jury trials even if given the option not to—and for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy the challenge of the legal procedures that take effect only during trials: jury selection and instructions, side-bar evidentiary rulings, pre-trial motions to bar evidence, etc. Others love the performance aspect; this is the time when the judge and lawyers get to pretend they are stage actors (and with the most captive of audiences). Other judges, quite frankly, want to wash their hands of having to make difficult decisions and therefore prefer to pass the buck to the jury.

Despite being a criminal-defense attorney (as well as an assistant village prosecutor), I find myself sympathetic to Judge Posner's desire to limit a jury system that seems to do more harm than good, though I am not so sure his proposal would change things as much as he might think.

EVAN J. WINER
Chicago, Illinois

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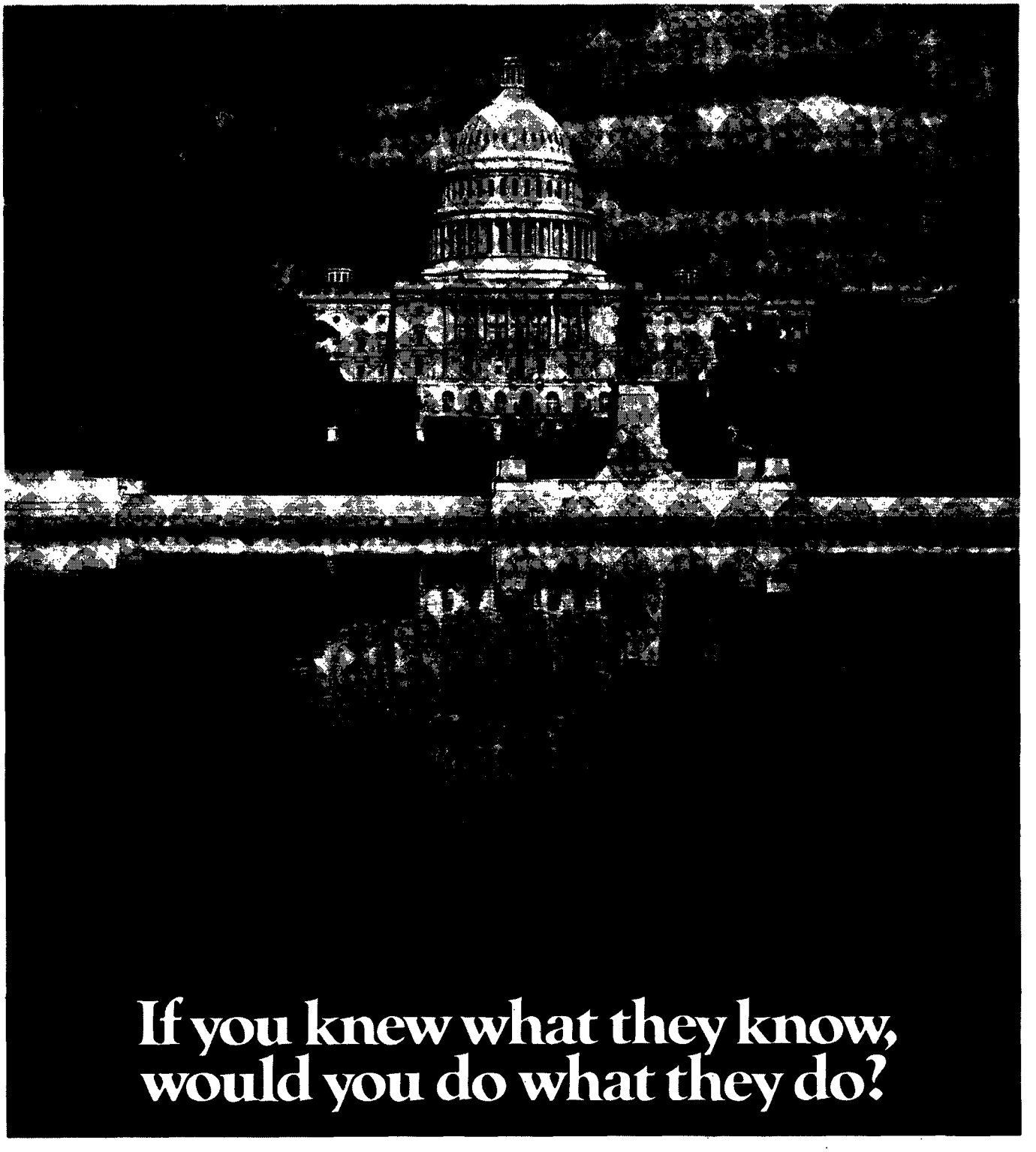

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Editing Commentary

A Valedictory

I CAN hardly remember a time when COMMENTARY was not a part of my life. I began reading it when I was in college in the late 1940's, shortly after it was founded under the editorship of Elliot E. Cohen; I began writing for it in 1953, when I was in graduate school in England; I began working for it, as an assistant editor, in 1955, exactly a day after being discharged from the army; and finally, after a separation of about two years and the death of Cohen, I returned in 1960 as his successor.

My appointment coincided almost to the moment with my 30th birthday and followed immediately upon COMMENTARY's 15th. Now, after running the magazine for a little more than 35 years, I am stepping down to become a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, in which capacity I will devote most of my time to writing; and with this issue, Neal Kozodoy, who joined my staff in 1966 and rose with amazing speed to become my deputy shortly thereafter, takes over as the third chief editor in COMMENTARY's half-century of existence.

Since I will continue contributing articles to the magazine, and since I will also serve in an advisory capacity as Editor-at-Large, my departure does not in any sense represent a complete break. Nevertheless, a long era in my own life, and in the history of COMMENTARY, is now coming to a definitive end.

I will leave it to others to decide what COMMENTARY did or did not accomplish during my tenure, but I want to say something here about what editing this magazine has meant for me, and to count the ways in which it has been a privilege, a blessing, and a joy.

Theodore Roosevelt once declared: "Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords," and a wonderful opportunity to participate fully and wholeheartedly in that sport is the first of the great privileges I have derived from being the editor of COMMENTARY. To be sure, I switched sides in the late 60's, having come to the conclusion that the Left, to which I had been committed, was (to borrow one of its own favorite formulas) part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Yet I learned many things from my years on the Left, not the least important of which was where and how and why it always seemed to go wrong (lessons that stood me in excellent stead when I dedicated myself and COMMENTARY to the struggle against its hegemony in the world of ideas). I also got to meet and associate closely with many gifted writers whose minds were so agile and whose articles were so dazzling that they blinded me temporarily to the recklessness of their ideas.

If "aggressively fighting for the right" is a noble sport, it is also a very bloody one, and so, to my lasting regret, breaking with the Left cost me the friendship of most of these interesting and amusing people. But the rewards of that break were much greater than the price. As a critic of the Left, I forged new friendships and new associations with a much wider and more variegated circle of writers, and in happy collaboration with them I was able to help repair at least some of the damage I had helped to wreak as a partisan of the Left.

But of course COMMENTARY not only gave me a chance as an American to participate from month to month in the incomparable intellectual exhilaration of the great debates over the soul of this country and its role in the world. It also provided an equally precious outlet for speaking the truth as I saw it about issues of special concern to me as a Jew. On some of those issues I have also

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changed my mind since the early 60's, becoming for example more aggressive in defense of Jewish interests in general and Israel in particular than I was then. Indeed, even when, more recently, I felt obliged to voice my doubts about the wisdom of the current Israeli government's negotiations with the PLO and Syria, it was in the firm belief that I was speaking in defense of Israel's interests.

Obviously none of this marvelously heady activity would have been possible without complete editorial freedom, and for that great blessing I have the American Jewish Committee to thank. Since 1990 the AJC has assumed responsibility for only a portion of COMMENTARY's annual deficit, with the rest being covered by a number of foundations and interested individuals whose generous contributions have kept us afloat. But even during the previous 45 years, when the AJC was COMMENTARY's sole source of financial support, the principle of editorial freedom on which it had established the magazine remained in force. And unusual as it was for an organization with an agenda of its own to subsidize a journal of opinion over whose contents it had no control, AJC's willingness to go on sponsoring COMMENTARY even after the magazine had moved into the neoconservative camp was altogether extraordinary. In this the Committee has provided a living demonstration of what liberalism at its classical best can look like.

TEN years ago, at a dinner commemorating my 25th anniversary as editor of COMMENTARY, I drew a connection between the work I was trying to do as an American and the work I was trying to do as a Jew, and what I said then still holds:

> I am . . . proud that I have been able, in and through COMMENTARY, to defend my *own*—my own country and the values and institutions for which it stands; my own people and the religious and cultural heritage by which we have been shaped. Like so many of us, I was educated to believe that the *last* thing one ought to be defending was one's own, that it was more honorable and nobler to turn one's back on one's own and fight for others and for other things in which one had no personal stake or interest. This has been a very hard lesson to unlearn, and I am proud to have unlearned it.
>
> COMMENTARY has defended America at a time when America has been under moral and ideological attack. COMMENTARY has defended the Jewish people and the Jewish state when they, too, and for many of the same reasons, have been subjected to a relentless assault on their legitimacy and even their very existence. For me there has been no conflict or contradiction involved in defending this dual heritage by which I have been formed.

I know from having worked closely with Neal Kozodoy for a very long time now that he feels much as I do about these matters. I also know that, while setting his own distinctive stamp on COMMENTARY as he leads it into what I am certain will be a brilliant new period of its history, he will continue defending the dual heritage by which he too has been formed.

In taking over this magazine, he will also inherit a community of readers whose responsiveness (as our correspondence columns in every issue so vividly demonstrate) is without parallel or precedent either in quantity or in quality among the subscribers to any other magazine. I count that too as one of the privileges and the blessings that come with the editorship of COMMENTARY, and I wish Neal Kozodoy as much joy of it in the years ahead as I have had in the 35 years just past.

—NORMAN PODHORETZ

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What To Do About Affirmative Action

Arch Puddington

THE thinking behind the policy of racial preference which has been followed in America over the past quarter-century under the name of "affirmative action"* is best summed up by former Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's famous dictum that, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take race into account."

The Orwellian quality of Blackmun's admonition is obvious. Seldom has a democratic government's policy so completely contradicted the core values of its citizenry as racial preference does in violating the universally held American ideals of fairness and individual rights, including the right to be free from discrimination. Not surprisingly, then, where Americans regarded the original civil-rights legislation as representing a long-overdue fulfillment of the country's democratic promise, they overwhelmingly see racial preference as an undemocratic and alien concept, a policy implemented by stealth and subterfuge and defended by duplicity and legalistic tricks.

Americans do not believe that past discrimination against blacks in the workplace justifies present discrimination against whites. Nor do they accept the thesis that tests and standards are tainted, *en masse*, by cultural bias against minorities. Having been taught in high-school civics classes that gerrymandering to ensure party domination represents a defect in democracy, Americans are bewildered by the argument that gerrymandering is necessary to ensure the political representation of blacks and Hispanics. They are unimpressed by the contention that a university's excellence is enhanced by the mere fact of racial and ethnic diversity in its student body, especially when entrance requirements must be lowered substantially to achieve that goal.

Americans, in short, oppose racial preference in all its embodiments, and have signified their opposition in opinion poll after opinion poll, usually by margins of three to one or more, with women as strongly opposed as men, and with an impressive proportion of blacks indicating opposition as well. The contention, repeatedly advanced by advocates of preferential policies, that a national consensus exists in support of such policies has been true only at the level of political elites. Americans do support what might be called soft affirmative action, entailing special recruitment, training, and outreach efforts, and are willing to accept some short-term compensatory measures to rectify obvious cases of proven discrimination. But attitudes have, if anything, hardened against the kind of aggressive, numbers-driven preference schemes increasingly encountered in university admissions and civil-service hiring.

NONETHELESS, up until this year, racial preference in its various manifestations has been impressively resistant to calls for reform, much less elimination. In fact, race consciousness has begun to insinuate itself into areas which, common sense alone would suggest, should be immune to intrusive government social engineering. To cite but one example of this disturbing trend: Congress has mandated that guidelines be established guaranteeing the involvement of minorities (and women) in clinical research—a form of scientific experimentation by quota.

There is, furthermore, reason to question whether the advocates of race-conscious social policy continue to take seriously the objective of getting "beyond race," a condition which presumably would warrant the elimination of all preferential programs. The late Thurgood Marshall, an outspoken champion of preference while on the Supreme Court, is reported to have blurted out during an in-chambers discussion that blacks would need affirmative action for a hundred

ARCH PUDDINGTON is senior scholar at Freedom House. He writes frequently on American race relations. The present article is the eleventh in a series by diverse authors which was inaugurated in September 1994.

* Affirmative action has, of course, been extended to women and certain other groups, but I will confine the discussion here to race. Affirmative action was devised primarily to promote the economic status of blacks, and the racial implications of the debate over this policy are far more significant than questions arising from preferences for women or other ethnic minorities. I should add that if preference for black Americans is unjustified, there is even less to be said for it when applied to women or to such immigrant groups as Hispanics and Asians.

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years. A similar opinion has been expressed by Benjamin Hooks, the former director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Hooks contends that affirmative action in some form should be accepted as one of those permanent, irritating features of American life—he cited as examples speeding laws and the April 15 income-tax deadline—which citizens tolerate as essential to the efficient and just functioning of society.

Neither Marshall nor Hooks is regarded as an extremist on race matters; their advocacy of a permanent regime of affirmative action falls within the mainstream of present-day liberal thought. The promotion of "diversity"—the latest euphemism for preferential representation—is as fundamental to liberal governance as was the protection of labor unions in an earlier era. And until very recently, liberal proponents of preference clearly believed that history was on their side.

Thus, where enforcement agencies were formerly cautious in pressing affirmative action on the medical profession, the Clinton administration was formulating plans for a quota system throughout the health-care workforce. The goal, according to one memo of Hillary Clinton's task force, was nothing less than to ensure that this workforce achieve "sufficient racial, ethnic, gender, geographic, and cultural diversity to be representative of the people it serves." The task force also had plans to guide minority doctors into specialties while tracking other doctors into general practice. To realize this medical-care diversity blueprint, the task force proposed the creation of a bureaucracy with coercive powers to regulate the "geographic" and "cultural" distribution of physicians and other medical practitioners.

How did America drift from the ideal of a color-blind society to the current environment of quotas, goals, timetables, race-norming, set-asides, diversity-training, and the like?

Those troubled by this question often refer wistfully to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s declaration that he hoped to see the day when his children would be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. Yet it must be recognized that even when King uttered those inspirational words at the 1963 March on Washington, they no longer reflected the thinking of crucial segments of the civil-rights movement. Already, increasingly influential black activists and their white supporters were advancing demands for hiring plans based on racial quotas. In pressing for such plans (then called compensatory treatment), the civil-rights movement was being joined by officials from the Kennedy administration, as well as by white intellectuals who, going further, announced that black economic equality could never be attained without a wholesale adjustment of standards and the merit principle.

These ruminations were not lost on the Dixiecrat opponents of desegregation, and the charge was soon made that Title VII of the pending civil-rights bill—the section dealing with discrimination in the workplace—would lead to the widespread practice of reverse discrimination. This in turn provoked a series of statements and speeches by stalwart liberals like Senators Hubert Humphrey, Joseph Clark, and Clifford Case, adamantly and unequivocally denying that the bill could be interpreted to permit racial preference.

In order to dispel lingering doubts, Humphrey and other supporters inserted an amendment to the bill declaring flatly that the law's purpose was to rectify cases of intentional discrimination and that it was not intended to impose sanctions simply because a workplace contained few blacks or because few blacks passed an employment test. Armed with this and similar clauses prohibiting reverse discrimination, Humphrey promised to "start eating the pages [of the civil-rights bill] one after another" if anyone could discover language in it "which provides that an employer will have to hire on the basis of percentage or quota."

Under normal circumstances, the insertion of unambiguous anti-preference language, combined with the condemnations of reverse discrimination by the bill's sponsors, would have been sufficient to prevent the subsequent distortion of the law's intent. But these protections turned out to be useless against the determination of the country's elites (in the political system, in the media, in the universities, and in the courts) to override them. Having concluded (especially after the urban riots of the late 60's) that social peace demanded racial preference, political leaders from both parties, along with a growing number of intellectuals and activists, both white and black, began looking upon the anti-preference clauses in Title VII as obstacles to be circumvented rather than guides to be followed. The anti-preference language which had been added to ensure passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was now not only ignored but treated as though it did not even exist.

Hence there was no serious effort by either Congress or the courts or anyone else to rein in the civil-rights bureaucracy, which dismissed the anti-preference provisions with contempt from the very outset. A "big zero, a nothing, a nullity," is how these provisions were characterized by an official of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at the time. Federal enforcement officials in general, most of whom were white, were more aggressive in pursuing preferences, and less inclined to reflect on the broader implications of affirmative action, than were many mainstream black leaders of that day,

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some of whom—Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, and Clarence Mitchell, for example—opposed reverse discrimination on moral and political grounds.

The part played by the EEOC in putting together the structure of racial preference cannot be overstated. In blithe and conscious disregard of the anti-preference sections of Title VII, EEOC officials broadened the definition of discrimination to encompass anything which contributed to unequal outcomes. In its most far-reaching move, the EEOC launched an all-out assault on employment testing. The agency's mindset was reflected in comments about "irrelevant and unreasonable standards," "the cult of credentialism," and "artificial barriers."

Yet despite the ingenuity of its lawyers in devising intricate arguments to circumvent the strictures against reverse discrimination—and despite the willingness of activist judges to accept these arguments—the EEOC could never have achieved its aims had it not been for a transformation of elite attitudes toward the problem of race in America.

In 1964, the year the Civil Rights Act was passed, an optimistic and morally confident America believed that the challenge posed by the "Negro revolution" could be met through a combination of anti-discrimination laws, economic growth, and the voluntary good will of corporations, universities, and other institutions. But by the decade's end, a crucial segment of elite opinion had concluded that America was deeply flawed, even sick, and that racism, conscious or otherwise, permeated every institution and government policy. Where individual prejudice had previously been identified as the chief obstacle to black progress, now a new target, "institutional racism," was seen as the principal villain. And where it was once thought that democratic guarantees against discrimination, plus the inherent fairness of the American people, were sufficient to overcome injustice, the idea now took hold that since racism was built into the social order, coercive measures were required to root it out.

In this view, moreover, the gradualist Great Society approach launched by Lyndon Johnson, which stressed education, training, and the strengthening of black institutions, could not alleviate the misery of the inner-city poor, at least not as effectively as forcing employers to hire them. Even Johnson himself began calling for affirmative action and issued an executive order directing that federal contractors adopt hiring policies which did not discriminate on the basis of race (or gender); in a process that would soon become all too familiar, court decisions and the guidelines of regulators subsequently interpeted the directive as mandating racial balance in the workforce, thus paving the way for demands that companies doing business with the government institute what often amounted to quotas in order to qualify for contracts.

Little noticed at the time—or, for that matter, later—was that black America was in the midst of a period of unprecedented economic progress, during which black poverty declined, the racial income gap substantially narrowed, black college enrollment mushroomed, and black advancement into the professions took a substantial leap forward. All this, it should be stressed, occurred *prior* to the introduction of government-mandated racial preference.

Once affirmative action got going, there was no holding it back. The civil-rights movement and those responsible for implementing civil-rights policy simply refused to accept an approach under which preference would be limited to cases of overt discrimination, or applied to a narrow group of crucial institutions, such as urban police departments, where racial integration served a pressing public need. Instead, every precedent was exploited to further the permanent entrenchment of race consciousness.

For example, the Philadelphia Plan, the first preferential policy to enjoy presidential backing (the President being Richard Nixon), was a relatively limited effort calling for racial quotas in the Philadelphia building trades, an industry with a notorious record of racial exclusion. Yet this limited program was seized upon by the EEOC and other agencies as a basis for demanding hiring-by-the-numbers schemes throughout the economy, whether or not prior discrimination could be proved.

Similarly, once a race-conscious doctrine was applied to one institution, it inevitably expanded its reach into other arenas. The Supreme Court's decision in *Griggs* v. *Duke Power, Inc.*—that employment tests could be found to constitute illegal discrimination if blacks failed at a higher rate than whites—was ostensibly confined to hiring and promotion. But *Griggs* was used to legitimize the burgeoning movement against testing and standards in the educational world as well. Tracking by intellectual ability, special classes for high achievers, selective high schools requiring admissions tests, standardized examinations for university admissions—all were accused of perpetuating historic patterns of bias.

The campaign against testing and merit in turn gave rise to a series of myths about the economy, the schools, the workplace, about America itself. Thus, lowering job standards as a means of hiring enough blacks to fill a quota was justified on the grounds that merit had never figured prominently in the American workplace, that the dominant principles had always been nepotism, backscratching, and conformism. To explain the ra-

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cial gap in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, the concept of cultural bias was advanced, according to which disparities in results derived from the tests' emphasis on events and ideas alien to urban black children. Another theory claimed that poor black children were not accustomed to speaking standard English and were therefore placed at a disadvantage in a normal classroom environment. It was duly proposed that black children be taught much like immigrant children, with bilingual classes in which both standard English and black English would be utilized. A related theory stated that black children retained a distinct learning style which differed in significant respects from the learning styles of other children. As one educator expressed the theory, any test which stressed "logical, analytical methods of problem-solving" would *ipso facto* be biased against blacks.

UNTIL quite recently, the very idea of abolishing racial preference was unthinkable; the most realistic ambitions for the critics of race-based social policy went no further than trying to limit—limit, not stop—the apparently relentless spread of racial preferences throughout the economy, the schools and universities, and the political system. Yet it now appears not only that the momentum of racial preference has been halted, but that, at a minimum, a part of the imposing affirmative-action edifice will be dismantled. Furthermore, a process has already been set in motion which could conceivably lead to the virtual elimination of race-based programs.

Racial preferences have become vulnerable mainly because of the sudden collapse of the elite consensus which always sustained affirmative action in the face of popular opposition. Where in the past many Republicans could be counted on to support, or at least tolerate, racial preferences, the new congressional majority seems much more inclined to take a sharply critical look at existing racial policies. Equally important is the erosion of support for preference within the Democratic party. While some newly skeptical Democrats are clearly motivated by worries about reelection, others have welcomed the opportunity to express long-suppressed reservations about policies which they see as having corrupted, divided, and weakened their party.

The revolt against affirmative action has also been heavily influenced by the fact that, as preferential policies have extended throughout the economy, a critical mass of real or perceived victims of reverse discrimination has been reached—white males who have been denied jobs, rejected for promotion, or prevented from attending the college or professional school of their choice because slots were reserved for blacks (or other minorities or women).

There is, no doubt, an inclination on the part of white men to blame affirmative action when they are passed over for jobs or promotions, a tendency which is reinforced by the atmosphere of secrecy surrounding most preference programs. But enough is known about affirmative action in the public sector through information which has come out in the course of litigation to conclude that thousands of whites have indeed been passed over for civil-service jobs and university admissions because of outright quotas for racial minorities. It is also clear that a considerable number of private businesses have been denied government contracts because of minority set-asides.

Another major factor in the change of attitude toward affirmative action is the California Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), which has already had an incalculable impact. The CCRI was organized by two white, male, and politically moderate professors in the California state-university system. The measure would amend the California constitution to prohibit the state government or any state agency (including the university system) from granting preference on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender in employment, college admissions, or the awarding of contracts. It would, in other words, effectively ban affirmative-action programs mandated by the state.

Though limited to California, the CCRI is at heart a response to the logical destination of affirmative action everywhere in America: quota systems sustained by the support of elites from both political parties. To be sure, policy by racial classification has grown more pervasive in California than elsewhere in America. White males have been told not to bother applying for positions with the Los Angeles fire department due to the need to fill minority quotas. In San Francisco, Chinese students are denied admission to a selective public high school because of an ethnic cap; for similar reasons, whites, mainly Jews and East European immigrants, are often denied admission to magnet schools in Los Angeles. A de-facto quota system effectively denies white males the opportunity to compete for faculty positions at certain state colleges. And, incredibly enough, the state legislature passed a bill calling for ethnic "guidelines" not only for admission to the state-university system but for graduation as well. The bill was vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson; had a Democrat been governor, it would almost certainly have become law.

The true impact of the CCRI can be gauged by the degree of fear it has generated among supporters of affirmative action. So long as the debate could be limited to the courts, the agencies of race regulation, and, when unavoidable, the legislative arena, affirmative action was secure. The mere threat of taking the issue directly to the voters, as the CCRI's sponsors propose to do through the referendum process, has elicited a downright

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panicky response—itself a clear indication that the advocates of racial preference understand how unpopular their case is, and how weak.

BUT a note of caution must be sounded to those who believe that current developments will lead inexorably to the reinstitution of color-blindness as the reigning principle in racial matters. The resilience of affirmative action in the face of widespread popular hostility suggests that even a modest change of course could prove a difficult and highly divisive affair.

There is, to begin with, the fact that affirmative action has been introduced largely by skirting the normal democratic process of debate and legislative action. Affirmative action is by now rooted in literally thousands of presidential directives, court decisions, enforcement-agency guidelines, and regulatory rules. These will not easily be overturned.

There is also the complicating factor of the federal judiciary's central role in overseeing racial policy. Given the emotionally charged character of the racial debate, the critics of racial preference will be tempted to postpone legislative action in the hope that the Supreme Court will resolve the issue once and for all. But while the Court today is less prone to judicial activism than during the Warren and Burger years, and while it may decide to limit the conditions under which a preferential program can be applied, it is unlikely to do away with affirmative action altogether.

The Republicans will face another temptation: to exploit white hostility to racial preference but avoid serious political action to eliminate it. A powerful political logic lies behind this temptation, since getting rid of affirmative action would also deprive the Republicans of a potent wedge issue. Yet one can hardly imagine a less desirable outcome than a prolonged and angry political confrontation over race. Moreover, if responsible politicians who share a principled opposition to preference decline to take the initiative, the door will be opened to racists and unscrupulous demagogues.

An additional obstacle to change is the fact that eliminating affirmative action does not offer much of a financial payoff. Affirmative action is not expensive; its only direct cost to the taxpayer is the expense of maintaining civil-rights agencies like the EEOC.

Claims have been made that affirmative action does represent a major cost to the American economy, but the facts are unclear since neither the media nor scholarly researchers nor the corporations themselves have shown an interest in undertaking an investigation of its economic impact. Indeed, though affirmative action is one of the most intensely discussed social issues of the day, it is probably the least researched. Press coverage is generally limited to the political debate; seldom are stories done about the actual functioning of affirmative-action programs. Nor is there much serious scholarly investigation of such questions as affirmative action's impact on employee morale, the performance of students admitted to college on an affirmative-action track, or the degree to which contract set-asides have contributed to the establishment of stable minority businesses.

Given the truly massive amount of research devoted to racial issues over the years, the lack of attention to preferential policies raises the suspicion that what has been operating here is a deliberate decision to avoid knowing the details of affirmative action's inner workings out of fear of the public reaction.

OPPONENTS of racial preference must also contend with the widespread acceptance of the "diversity" principle within certain key institutions. Here the American university stands out for its uncritical embrace of the notion that, as one recent cliché has it, "diversity is part of excellence." When Francis Lawrence, the president of Rutgers University, came under fire for uttering the now-famous phrase which seemed to question the genetic capabilities of black students, his principal defense—indeed practically his only defense—was that he had increased minority enrollment at Rutgers and during a previous administrative stint at Tulane. True to form, no one bothered to ask how black students recruited under Lawrence's diversity initiatives had fared academically or psychologically, or how the campus racial atmosphere had been affected, or how much standards had been adjusted to achieve the quota. The body count, and the body count alone, was what mattered for Lawrence, and, it would seem, for administrators at many campuses.

The diversity principle is also firmly entrenched throughout government service. Most agencies include a diversity or affirmative-action department, headed by an official with deputy-level status, with intrusive authority to promote staff "balance" and minority participation in contract bidding. So, too, private corporations have accepted affirmative action as part of the price of doing business. Large corporations, in fact, can usually be counted on to oppose anti-quota legislation, preferring the simplicity of hiring by the numbers to the uncertainty of more flexible systems and the increased possibilities of anti-discrimination litigation brought by minorities or by whites claiming reverse bias.

But of course the most serious obstacle to change is black America's strong attachment to affirmative action. Race-conscious policies have had no demonstrable effect at all on the black poor, but they are widely perceived as having played a crucial role in creating the first mass

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black middle class in American history. The claim here is wildly exaggerated—to repeat, the trend was already well advanced before affirmative action got going. Nevertheless, to many blacks, affirmative action has become not a series of temporary benefits but a basic civil right, almost as fundamental as the right to eat at a restaurant or live in the neighborhood of one's choice, and certainly more important than welfare.

Accordingly, black leaders, who are always quick to condemn even the most modest changes as "turning back the clock" or as a threat to the gains of the civil-rights movement, have now escalated the counterattack in response to the more sweeping recent challenge to affirmative action. When Governor Pete Wilson made some favorable comments about the CCRI, Jesse Jackson compared him to George Wallace blocking the schoolhouse door in Jim Crow Alabama. And when congressional Republicans moved to rescind a set-aside program in the communications industry, Representative Charles Rangel, a Democrat from Harlem, declared that the move reflected a Nazi-like mindset.

It is true that many blacks are ambivalent about preferences, or even critical of them. At the same time, however, they are highly sensitive to perceptions of white assaults on civil rights, and they may well find polemics of the Jackson and Rangel variety persuasive.

CONFRONTED with all these obstacles, some opponents of affirmative action are leaning toward a compromise strategy involving a program-by-program review. This would be a serious mistake; the most desirable and politically effective course would be federal legislation modeled on the CCRI. Such a measure would leave in place the old laws against discrimination but would eliminate all federal programs which extend preference on the basis of race (as well as ethnicity or gender).

The measure could conceivably take the form of a reaffirmation of the sections of the 1964 Civil Rights Act dealing with the workplace, with special emphasis on the clauses explicitly prohibiting reverse discrimination. But whatever the specific shape of the new legislation, absolute clarity would be required on the principal issue: there would be no room for fudging, vagueness, or loopholes on the question of bringing the era of race-conscious social policy to a close. The legislation would therefore also have to include an explicit disavowal of the disparate-impact doctrine, under which the disproportionate representation of the races (or sexes) is often regarded as evidence in itself of discrimination, and which has often led to the imposition of de-facto quota systems.

The political struggle over this kind of sweeping legislation would be angry and unpleasant. But eliminating both the practice of racial preference and the controversy surrounding it would set the stage for an ultimate improvement in the racial environment throughout American society. On the other hand, an approach focusing on a program-by-program review of the multitude of preference initiatives in an ephemeral search for compromise only guarantees the permanence both of affirmative action itself and of the affirmative-action controversy.

A less sweeping but nevertheless useful approach would be a presidential decree revoking the executive order issued by President Johnson which opened the way to federally-mandated quotas. Though (as we have seen) Johnson did not necessarily intend this to happen, the fact is that his directive became a crucial pillar of the affirmative-action structure. With the stroke of a pen it could be rescinded.

So far as the universities are concerned, the elimination of affirmative action would mean an end to lowering standards in order to fill racial quotas. No doubt this would also mean a smaller number of blacks at the elite universities, but there are perfectly decent state colleges and private institutions for every promising student whose qualifications do not meet the standards of Yale or Stanford. The notion that a degree from one of these institutions consigns the graduate to a second-class career is based on sheer prejudice and myth; for evidence to the contrary, one need look no further than the new Republican congressional delegation, which includes a number of graduates from what would be considered second- or third-tier colleges.

It hardly needs to be added that directing a student to a university for which he is educationally and culturally unprepared benefits neither the student nor the university nor the goal of integration. The results are already clear to see in the sorry state of race relations on campus. Many colleges are dominated by an environment of racial balkanization, with blacks increasingly retreating into segregated dormitories and black student unions, rejecting contacts with white students out of fear of ostracism by other blacks, and then complaining of the loneliness and isolation of campus life. Drop-out rates for those admitted on affirmative-action tracks are high, adding to black student frustration. These problems are invariably exacerbated by college administrators who respond to racial discontent with speech codes, sensitivity training, multicultural seminars, curriculum changes, and other aggressively prosecuted diversity initiatives.

Some have proposed basing affirmative action in university admissions on social class—that is, extending preferences to promising students from impoverished backgrounds, broken homes, and similar circumstances. On a superficial level, this would seem a sensible idea. Blacks would

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profit because they suffer disproportionately from poverty. Universities would gain from the high motivation of the students selected for the program. And real diversity would be enhanced by the presence of students whose backgrounds differed radically from the middle- and upper-class majority, and whose opinions could not be so predictably categorized along the conformist race (and gender) lines which dominate campus discussion today.

One major caveat is that college administrators, who give every indication of total commitment to the present race-based arrangements, would discover ways to circumvent a program based on color-blind standards. Indeed, they have already done so. Under the terms of the *Bakke* case (1978), which established the guidelines for affirmative action in university admissions, race could be counted as one of several factors, including social class; affirmative action based on race alone, the Supreme Court said, could not pass muster. As matters have evolved, affirmative action on many state campuses, most notably those in California, is based almost exclusively on race and ethnicity.

A similar class-based formula is difficult to envision outside the realm of university admissions. Yet there is no reason to assume that private businesses would respond to the elimination of government-enforced affirmative action by refusing to hire and promote qualified blacks. A return to race-neutral government policies would also enable black executives and professionals to shed the affirmative-action stigma, since no one would suspect that they were in their positions only as the result of pressure by a federal agency. The supporters of preferential policies may dismiss affirmative action's psychological effects on the beneficiaries as unimportant. But the evidence indicates that the image of a black professional class having risen up the career ladder through a special racial track is a source of serious workplace demoralization for members of the black middle class.

THE arguments which have lately been advanced in favor of retaining affirmative action are by and large the same arguments that were made more than twenty years ago, when the intellectual debate over preference began.

Probably the least compelling of these is the contention that the advantages extended by university admissions offices to athletes, the children of alumni, and applicants from certain regions of the country justify extending similar advantages on the basis of race. The answer to this contention is simple: race is different from other criteria. America acknowledged the unique nature of racial discrimination when it enacted the landmark civil-rights laws of the 1960's. Moreover, the suggestion cannot be sustained that outlawing preference based on race while permitting preference based on nonracial standards would leave blacks even farther behind. Blacks, in fact, benefit disproportionately from admissions preferences for athletes or those with talents in music and art. No one objects, or thinks it unusual or wrong for some groups to be overrepresented and others to be underrepresented on the basis of such criteria.

A similar, but even weaker, argument (already alluded to above) holds that America has never functioned as a strict meritocracy, and that white males have maintained their economic dominance through connections, pull, and family. Affirmative action, this theory goes, simply levels the playing field and actually strengthens meritocracy by expanding the pool of talent from which an employer draws. The problem is that those who advance this argument seem to assume that only white males rely on personal relationships or kinship. Yet as we have learned from the experience of immigrants throughout American history, every racial and ethnic group values family and group ties. Korean-American shop-owners enlist their families, Haitian-American taxi fleets hire their friends.

What about the claim that affirmative action has improved the racial climate by hastening the integration of the workplace and classroom? While the integration process has often been painful and disruptive, there is no question that more contact between the races at school and at work has made America a better society. But integration has not always succeeded, and the most signal failures have occurred under conditions of government coercion, whether through busing schemes or the imposition of workplace quotas. In case after case, the source of failed integration can be traced to white resentment over racial preference or the fears of blacks that they will be perceived as having attained their positions through the preferential track.*

There is, finally, the argument that, since black children suffer disproportionately from poor nutrition, crack-addicted parents, wrenching poverty, and outright discrimination, affirmative action rightly compensates for the burden of being born black in America. Yet affirmative action has been almost entirely irrelevant to these children, who rarely attend college or seek a professional career. The new breed of Republican conservatives may sometimes betray a disturbing ignorance of the history of racial discrimination in America. But on one crucial issue they are most certainly right: the march toward equality begins at birth, with the structure, discipline, and love of

* An important exception is the military, where affirmative action is applied to promotions but where standards have not been lowered to enlarge the pool of qualified black applicants.

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a family. The wide array of government-sponsored compensatory programs, including affirmative action, has proved uniformly ineffective in meeting the awesome challenge of inner-city family deterioration.

To advocate a policy of strict race neutrality is not to ignore the persistence of race consciousness, racial fears, racial solidarity, racial envy, or racial prejudice. It is, rather, to declare that government should not be in the business of preferring certain groups over others. Because it got into this business, the United States has been moved dangerously close to a country with an officially-sanctioned racial spoils system. Even Justice Blackmun was concerned about this kind of thing. In his *Bakke* opinion, Blackmun made it clear that preferential remedies should be regarded as temporary, and he speculated that race-conscious policies could be eliminated in ten years—that is, by the end of the 1980's.

Affirmative action's supporters grow uncomfortable when reminded of Blackmun's stipulation, which clashes with their secret conviction that preferences will be needed forever. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, they believe that racism (and sexism) pervade American life, and they can always find a study, a statistic, or an anecdote to justify their prejudice.

If racial preference is not eliminated now, when a powerful national momentum favors resolving the issue once and for all, the result may well be the permanent institutionalization of affirmative action, though probably at a somewhat less expansive level than is the case right now. Alternatively, a cosmetic solution, which eliminates a few minor policies while leaving the foundation of racial preference in place, could trigger a permanent and much more divisive racial debate, with a mushrooming of state referenda on preference and the growing influence of extremists of both races.

It is clear that a bipartisan majority believes that the era of racial preference should be brought to a close. It will take an unusual amount of political determination and courage to act decisively on this belief. But the consequences of a failure to act could haunt American political life for years to come.

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What To Do About Health Care

David Frum

In the 1970's, an East German defector to the West was assigned the task of helping other escapees adjust to life in a free country. The problem, he remembered years later, was that from kindergarten through college, from the moment the newspaper was opened in the morning to the moment the radio was turned off at night, every East German was bombarded by state propaganda telling him that the West was afflicted by hideous poverty, unemployment, and crime. As a result, East Germans naturally concluded that in the West poverty, unemployment, and crime were completely unknown.

In the same way, after two years of hearing President Clinton insist that health care was the gravest problem the country faced, it was natural for the President's political opponents to conclude that health care is one subject they need never think about again. A consensus has rapidly formed that Clinton's health-care campaign blighted his presidency. Americans are by and large content with the care they get. They mistrust federal plans to tinker with that care. And other social problems—crime, welfare, immigration—worry them far more. Would it not be wiser to leave the vexed thing alone?

Unfortunately, the mere fact that President Clinton identified health care as an urgent national problem does not automatically prove that it is *not* an urgent national problem. It is, and will remain so.

Yet the persistence and intractability of the health-care problem should not rehabilitate the President's plan. Looking again at this plan, and at the torrent of papers and articles that explicated and defended it, one can only gape at its arrogance and unreality. Apologists insist that it was by no means the socialist document it was represented to be, that it included a dose of market competition. Perhaps so; but this dose of competition was, in a curious sense, the ultimate hubris: the plan's chief architects, Ira Magaziner and Hillary Rodham Clinton, regarded markets not as an infinite series of voluntary exchanges, but as a mechanism, as one more device for state control. They flattered themselves that they could introduce market-like arrangements where they pleased, bar them where they liked, and generally manipulate them to produce desired results.

Even that, however, does not quite convey the full ambition of the plan Magaziner and Mrs. Clinton wrote for the President. The Clinton plan in the minds of its authors aimed at nothing less than slyly reviving the dying hopes of liberalism. Thus: Health care would displace busing as a means of compelling racial integration, since the plan's compulsory-insurance cachements would group cities and their inner and outer suburbs together. Health care would be the method for snuffing out the independence of university medical and science faculties, as state and federal officials determined which specialties would be taught, to how many students, and from which ethnic backgrounds. Health care would enable Washington to deliver colossal subsidies to favored business interests, by relieving unionized manufacturers of foolishly extended commitments and by offering smaller businesses below-market insurance at rates to be determined by the effectiveness of their lobbying. And health care would revive the Democratic party by proving to an increasingly skeptical middle class that Big Government could once again pay off for them.

Altogether, the Clinton health plan would have amounted to the most ambitious peacetime assertion of state power over civil society since the National Recovery Act of 1935. Its collapse must be reckoned as one of the closest shaves in the history of American democracy.

Good luck cannot, however, always be counted on. If Americans are to ward off future versions of the Clinton plan, or worse, believers in a free economy and free institutions must grapple with the same problem that Ira Magaziner and Mrs. Clinton did. Or, actually, the same five problems.

Health care is, in the first place, a *budgetary* problem. Together, Medicare (which goes to retirees regardless of income) and Medicaid (which goes only to the indigent) cost $55 billion when Ronald Reagan took office. Today they cost nearly five times as much.

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Hence, if the growth of the two biggest federal health-care programs could somehow have been held to the rate of inflation over the past decade-and-a-half, the federal budget would have been sitting comfortably in surplus today. Unless these two programs—and other health-care-driven programs like veterans' benefits and federal employees' retirement benefits—can somehow be brought under control in the future, it is impossible to imagine how the federal budget can be balanced and taxes cut.

Second, health care is an *economic* problem. Americans pay more than 13 percent of the national income for health care—more than any other major industrial nation. And the bills keep mounting at an unbelievable clip. One survey of large employers found that their health costs per employee more than doubled in the ten years 1984-93, from $1,645 to $3,781. Small employers' costs have mushroomed even more dramatically. True, prices have come off the boil slightly over the past three years—but they are still rising faster than inflation and faster than overall economic growth. The exploding costs of benefits are gobbling up money that might otherwise have been paid to employees in cash: one important reason for the wage stagnation during the 1980's boom.

Health care is also a *social* problem. The United States is aging rapidly. While the total population is expected to increase by about 20 percent between 1990 and 2030, the number of Americans older than 65 is expected to double. When Americans reach age 65, they enter a new country—one characterized by stark dependence on government. The tilting of the demographic balance toward the old therefore threatens to tilt the country's social balance away from self-reliance and toward welfarism. And even before they reach retirement, many Americans do indeed suffer the anxieties that Mrs. Clinton so passionately described during the debate over her plan: anxieties about losing their insurance if they lose or change their job, and about insurers or employers arbitrarily changing the rules of the plans they rely on.

INEVITABLY, then, health care will again rise as a *political* problem. One thing, at least, Republicans should have learned from the Bush years—it is not prudent to tell voters who think they have a problem that they are mistaken. To be sure, most people like the care they get. A major survey done in 1993 on behalf of Novalis Corporation—a consultant to the managed-care industry—found that nearly 80 percent of Americans rated their own personal care as "good" or "excellent." Only 5.4 percent rated the care they were receiving as "poor." Startlingly, more than half of the *un*insured rated *their* care as good or excellent. Even more startlingly, 55 percent of the uninsured reported that they enjoyed the services of a family doctor.

How can this be? For one thing, the typical uninsured American is not the widow Jones and her four hungry children: they are on Medicaid. The typical uninsured American is a high-school graduate looking for his first job, or a recently divorced woman waiting on tables while she tries to put her life back together. Sixty percent of the uninsured are under 30. Most of them will go without insurance for only a short time, just as they will go without employment for a short time: at any given moment, as many as 39 million Americans may lack insurance, but only 4 percent of the population are without it for as long as 28 months.

Since the uninsured are younger and healthier than average, and since state regulators have heaped so many minimum requirements onto private health-insurance plans, conventional policies represent a bad deal for most of these young people. If they could buy a bare-bones policy for $800 or $1,000, many of them might do it. But if forced to buy an expensive plan, they will wait until an employer purchases it on their behalf (not considering that he will submerge the cost by lowering wages).

Yet while Americans like the care they get, they feel no such enthusiasm for the national system as a whole. Only 45 percent rate the health-care system "overall" as excellent or good. Enough bad news has percolated through the population to persuade a majority to rate the *nation's* health-care situation, as against their own personal situation, as fair or poor. Which means that the malfunctioning of the system—its out-of-control costs, and the sense of powerlessness it inflicts on millions of consumers—will again sound a political echo.

Fifth, health care represents a *moral* problem for American democracy. Everywhere one looks, the distorted health-care market has created incentives for squalid behavior. Because Medicaid reimburses hospitals at absurdly low rates, they make up the shortfall by deliberately inflating the bills of their privately-insured patients. Because Medicaid covers nursing-home care and Medicare does not, and because Congress in 1988 enacted legislation that prevents Medicaid from investigating the assets of next-of-kin, old people can pass their assets intact to their children and then get cared for by the taxpayer. (This practice has become so routine that Senator Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois won her race in 1992 despite the revelation that she had engaged in just such asset-shifting in order to qualify her mother for Medicaid.) Because the cost of insurance is escalating so rapidly, even conscientious employers are pressured to scale back the coverage they offer. And because welfare recipients are entitled to Medicaid but intact low-income working families generally are not, the failures of the American health-care market add one more temptation to the allurements of the dole.

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THESE are big problems, they are urgent problems, and they are difficult problems. But anyone who wants to fix them has to begin by liberating his mind from the illusion the Clinton administration propagated about the American health-care system—the illusion that it is a free-market, private-sector system, and that its faults derive from the brutal appetite for profit.

In fact, health care is the sector of the American economy where government's power weighs most heavily. The vast sums of Medicare and Medicaid money pumped into the health market since 1965 helped to spark the medical-cost inflation of the past 30 years. State regulation effectively outlaws cheap health-insurance plans by specifying a long list of services, from acupuncture to psychiatry, that any employer who decides to set up a plan must provide. But the most important of all the government-created distortions of the health market is the way health benefits are taxed.

Suppose you are given a $100-a-week raise by your employer. If you are a professional or managerial worker, you will be lucky to take home $55 of it after income and payroll taxes. If, however, that same $100 were spent to beef up your health insurance, every dollar of it would be available to you. For anyone whose health is not absolutely perfect, $100 of health insurance is more valuable than $100 in cash.

This distortion has twisted health insurance into strange shapes. Compare health insurance to automobile insurance. When you buy a policy, you pay a price calibrated to the riskiness of the car you drive and your own safety history. Automobile insurance is *insurance*—protection against big losses for which you pay a premium determined by the probability that you will incur such a loss. The policy does not cover new tires, tune-ups, or gasoline.

By contrast, health-insurance premiums are not much influenced by the riskiness of the actual people covered, nor does health insurance pay only against substantial losses. What are conventionally thought of as "good" plans cover eyeglasses, prescription drugs, check-ups, and other routine expenses. In other words, health insurance, for most Americans, is not insurance but a disguised form of salary. It is as if the federal government were to decide that money spent by employers to feed lunch to their employees could be deducted from taxes. And it is as if, instead of paying their employees and sending them out to get their own lunch with after-tax dollars, employers would set up lunchrooms and add asparagus and artichokes to the salad bar whenever profits improved.

Making health insurance a perk rather than insurance causes people to divert more of their income toward health care than they would otherwise prefer. If instead of giving me a raise, my employer juices up my health plan so that I can buy a new pair of eyeglasses every year, new eyeglasses are what I will take—even though I would rather have new shoes for the children or books or a little extra money for groceries.

Noninsurance health insurance also teaches people not to care about the price of the medical services they buy. In their remarkable book, *Patient Power*, John Goodman and Gerald Musgrave asked seven different Dallas-area hospitals the price of a complete blood count. The charge varied from $11 to $33. They found the same disparities for big-ticket services too: the normal delivery of a child could cost anywhere from $1,000 to more than $2,000. The same consumers who would drive across town to save a dollar and a half on a movie ticket neither know nor care what they pay for medical services, because the money they save belongs to their employer, not to them.

Worse, the value of the health-care perk varies not according to your health-care needs, but according to your income. If you are paying a 50-percent marginal tax rate, you would have to earn an extra $6,000 to buy a $3,000 health-insurance policy with after-tax dollars. If you are paying a 25-percent marginal tax rate, you would only need to earn an extra $4,000. Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation notes that the nontaxability of health-care fringe benefits amounted to a $48-billion tax expenditure in 1991, most of which was lavished upon the highest-income taxpayers.

Finally, so long as health insurance is thought of as a perk, it will remain a deal not between the consumer and the provider of health services, but between the provider and the consumer's employer. Everywhere else in American society, the past fifteen years have humbled giant bureaucracies. Automakers, the phone company, television networks—every corporation that used to hand everyone "take-it-or-leave-it" deals has felt the new power of consumers who enjoy more information and more choices than ever before. But not medicine. There, consumers still approach bureaucracies as dependents and supplicants. Why? Because they do not control the money they are spending.

WHATEVER the Clinton plan's other evils, it was not illogical. Clinton proposed to eliminate the health market's inconsistencies by proceeding faster in the direction the country had been heading since 1965 toward fully state-controlled medicine. Unless his opponents can reverse course and pull the country back toward a free market in health care, something like the Clinton plan must someday prevail. The choice for America does not lie between the Clinton plan and the status quo. The status quo cannot be sustained. The real choice is between some variant of the Clinton plan and free-market reform.

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So far, conservatives have produced three main approaches to health-care reform. In 1983, the Reagan administration sought to cap the increase in Medicare costs by stipulating in advance the amount it would pay to hospitals for 467 distinct procedures. Until then, hospitals had set their own prices more or less as they pleased, and mailed the bills to Washington. The Reagan caps did jolt the hospitals and did produce one-time savings. But as hospitals learned the system, the upward march of prices swiftly resumed.

Worse, while the Reagan caps failed to rein in Medicare, they succeeded in lowering the program's standards of care, by setting reimbursement rates for many simple operations below the hospitals' own costs without creating incentives for hospitals to restructure those costs. As a result, Medicare patients often fail to find hospitals willing to perform simple but important services.

The second conservative approach was the individual-mandate plan designed by Heritage's Butler in 1991. Heritage figured that since everyone in the country was getting some form of health coverage anyway, everyone ought to buy it. But unlike most liberal schemes, the Heritage plan imposed the obligation to buy insurance not on employers but on individuals.

In order to make insurance affordable to poorer people, the Heritage plan would have Washington seize the $48-billion tax subsidy to the private-insurance market and redistribute it. If your employer paid $3,000 a year to buy you health insurance, that $3,000 would now count as "income" on your W-2. What you would get instead would be a tax credit for the purchase of health insurance, ranging from 20 percent if you had a high income to as much as 90 percent if you were very poor.

Thus, an affluent person who bought a $3,000 policy (and he would probably be buying it for himself since the government would no longer be giving his employer a tax subsidy to buy the policy for him) would be able to subtract $600 from his income tax. The remaining $2,400 he would have to pay out of his own pocket with after-tax dollars. That would make him a much more careful shopper. Meanwhile, a low-income person who spent $1,000 on a cheap policy would get a tax credit for as much as $900—and if that $900 exceeded the insured person's income-tax liability, he would get a check for the balance from the IRS.

The Heritage plan would make insurance much more accessible while also inducing Americans to be a little more price-conscious. Upper-income Americans would care about price because they would be paying 80 percent of the cost of their insurance policies themselves with after-tax dollars. Lower-income Americans would care about price because—even though their out-of-pocket costs would nearly vanish—they would be obliged to shop for insurance policies on their own, rather than simply presenting themselves to a doctor who would bill Medicare or Medicaid.

Back in 1992 and early '93, when some type of socialized medicine hovered ominously close, the Heritage plan looked like a daring free-market reform. As backing for the Clinton plan crumbled, though, the redistributionist features of the Heritage scheme cost it most of its support among Republicans. Libertarian-minded Republicans disliked ordering people to buy insurance, and conservatives generally gagged as they realized that Heritage's system of credits would steepen the progressivity of an already redistributionist tax system—an especially sore point after President Clinton hiked the top federal-tax rate to nearly 40 percent (up from 28 percent just five years ago).

Because Medicaid and Medicare would continue to absorb virtually all the health-care costs of the poorest and oldest—in fact, these programs would take on even larger responsibilities—it is doubtful that the Heritage plan would do very much to reduce health care's drain on the federal treasury. Nor would the Heritage plan affect the way Americans react to health costs. From the point of view of the consumer, not much would change: he would go on sending his medical bills to CIGNA or Aetna for reimbursement as he incurred them. All he would notice was that he was paying higher income taxes.

After months of intra-conservative pummeling, Butler surrendered his sword this winter. He co-authored an article in the winter issue of *Policy Review*, Heritage's quarterly publication, with one of his severest critics, William Niskanen, retreating from the specifics of the 1991 plan to more general principles that nearly all free-market-minded people would accept.

Niskanen is president of the libertarian Cato Institute, and the principles he and Butler promulgated seem to point more naturally to the approach Cato advocates, and which has been endorsed by nearly 200 Congressmen: the medical-savings (or Medisave) plan devised by John Goodman and Gerald Musgrave of the National Center for Policy Analysis in Dallas. All the technicalities aside, it would work more or less like this:

The tax exemption for contributions by employers to health-insurance plans would be abolished in favor of tax-exempt Medisave accounts. Employees and their employers would make donations to these accounts, out of which individuals would pay for their routine medical expenses. Whatever was left over in the account at year's end would remain the saver's property. Over a number of years, reasonably healthy people would compound tidy nest eggs with which to finance their health costs in old age. In the meantime, they would protect themselves against seri-

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ous illnesses by purchasing a new type of policy, one made available by the repeal of state and federal regulations controlling what a health-insurance policy must look like.

The new policies would carry very high deductibles—$3,000 a year. Since more than 80 percent of Americans spend less than $3,000 a year on health insurance, the premiums for these policies would be relatively low. Large savings could also be made in administrative expenses. As economists often point out, a $50 claim costs as much to process as a $50,000 claim. Under Medisave the vast bulk of medical costs would be paid without having to crank up the bureaucratic machinery of the insurance companies.

Over time, these Medisave accounts would eliminate the need for Medicare. As for Medicaid, it could be replaced either by a more modest version of the Heritage Foundation's tax-credit scheme or else by direct payments by the government to Medisave accounts established for low-income people.

The tremendous advantage of the Goodman and Musgrave plan is that it would bring medical-cost inflation screeching to a halt. As people bought medical services for themselves, with real dollars that they could otherwise keep, they would suddenly start to shop as cannily for health care as they do for food and shelter and every other essential of life. There is no inherent reason that health costs must skyrocket: the prices of all other technology-intensive services almost invariably fall.

And the Goodman and Musgrave scheme would accomplish this while protecting the quality of health care: patients would no longer be subject to an insurer's determination—or Medicare's—of what they did or did not need. They could decide for themselves whether or not they required a third day in the hospital after giving birth; they could decide for themselves whether or not they wanted to pay for a policy that covered psychological trauma.

The weakness of the Goodman and Musgrave plan is that it pays comparatively little attention to the problem of insuring America's poorest. Their Cato allies have suggested that the best answer to this problem lies in forming pools of high-risk people whom each state would pay private insurers to take care of. Twenty-eight states have already enacted something very like what Cato recommends. But this remains an inadequate response to the ever-mounting medical ills of America's growing ranks of underclass poor.

WHAT, then, to do? The four main goals of health-care reform are:

- To alleviate the burden that spiraling health costs impose on the federal budget.
- To alleviate the burden that spiraling health costs impose on private industry.
- To bring insurance within easier reach of the uninsured.
- To nip in the bud the deterioration in medical quality that has begun to manifest itself as employers and governments control costs with top-down administrative measures instead of competition.

The Goodman and Musgrave Medisave plan goes far toward accomplishing these goals. It ought to be the basic building block of any Republican reform. But it does not reach quite far enough. Four additional steps are needed.

First, Medicaid—the most rapidly growing and most abused federal-health program—should be reconceived. Instead of being a piece of the health-care puzzle, Medicaid, along with the federal disability program, must be recognized as a piece of the welfare puzzle. Medicaid is already administered by the states, under widely varying rules. Indeed, one man—former New York Governor Mario Cuomo—is almost single-handedly responsible for the explosion of Medicaid costs. New York State, though it contains only 9 percent of the Medicaid population, gobbles up 18 percent of Medicaid spending. Congress should do with Medicaid what it is preparing to do with welfare: cap benefits at their present level, convert the money into block grants to the states, and repeal all rules inhibiting state freedom to experiment.

After all, the tragedies counted among America's most horrific health problems—from premature underweight babies to AIDS-infected drug addicts to the twelve-year-old gunshot victims bleeding to death in lackadaisical ambulances—are not really health problems, any more than the plight of the homeless is a housing problem. They are incidents and by-products of the breakdown of social order among the urban underclass.

Thus, for example, the demographer Nicholas Eberstadt has demonstrated that even though ultra-low-birth-weight babies enjoy better odds of survival in America than in any other country, America still suffers a horrific infant-mortality rate because American mothers give birth to so many more low-weight babies than mothers in other countries. Eberstadt has shown that the most important factor in determining birth weight is the mother's own conduct. Mothers who drink, smoke, eat badly, and take drugs during pregnancy will have low-birth-weight babies—and such mothers are highly likely to be unmarried. So long as the welfare system encourages illegitimacy, Medicaid could double its prenatal spending every single year and still fail to make a dent in America's infant-mortality statistics.

Next, Washington must get out of the business of providing health care itself. The Veterans Administration (VA) is the single largest hospital system in the nation—and also a notoriously inefficient and shoddy one. Hospitals are located where long-forgotten Congressmen could profit

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politically from them. Costs are high, service quality is low. Everybody agrees that veterans have special claims on the public, combat veterans most of all. But those claims could be met, better and more cheaply, if Washington made extra contributions to veterans' Medisave accounts so that they could buy an insurance policy of their choosing. And then the VA's network of inefficient hospitals could be taken off the nation's books.

As Washington turns Medicaid over to the states and veterans' assistance over to the private sector, the states must likewise limit their own ambitions and abandon their habit of interfering in their medical markets. If an insurance company wants to offer a cheap plan that does not cover acupuncture, chiropractic, or replacement eyeglasses, it should be allowed to do so. If a health maintenance organization (HMO) wants to contract only with a specified list of doctors who agree to follow certain rules, it should be allowed to do that, too—without the state legislature forcing it to deal with "any willing provider." The 39 million uninsured have money to spend. If permitted, the insurance companies will offer policies such people can afford. America has 39 million uninsured people for the same reason that it would have 39 million naked people if the only clothing stores permitted to operate were Bendel's and Saks. We should legalize K-Mart insurance before concluding that the private sector cannot do the job.

Finally, America's most permanent and intractable health problem arises from the most permanent and intractable fact of life: old age. It is expensive to be old even if you are comparatively healthy, and it is very expensive if you are not healthy. Beginning on or about August 15, 2010, the front wedge of the baby boom will turn 65. They are going to need hearing aids and prescription drugs and pacemakers and hip replacements and all the other wonderful contrivances of modern medical technology. And beginning on or about August 15, 2020, these baby-boomer retirees will need nurses and in-home care and, in the end, institutional care.

All that will require money—huge amounts of money. Whose? As things are going, the money will have to come from a penurious government squeezing all it can out of the baby-bust generation. This effectively guarantees that the baby boomers will receive low-grade care in their declining years. If, however, the money paying those nurses and buying the pacemakers is their own, they will enjoy an abundance of choices and eager service in health care, as consumers do in every other sector of a market economy.

In order to ensure that they have the money to spend, though, the baby boomers must begin at once, if they have not done so already, to save like chipmunks anticipating a hard winter. Doing that over the hurdles of a 39-percent top federal tax rate and a 28-percent capital-gains rate will be no easy trick.

Like everything else, then, the health-care problem turns out to be a corollary of the growth of the U.S. economy and the accumulation of private capital. Four years ago, the Heritage Foundation convened a conference to discuss whether tax reform was the key to health-care reform. It is, but not in the sense Heritage meant. Low taxes, and especially low taxes on saving, are the key to the health reform that matters most: enabling Americans to sock away the money they will require to buy care when they can no longer care for themselves.

As complicated as the American health-care story is, it can be summed up simply. Through its tax policies, and then through the invention of Medicare and Medicaid, the federal government has twisted the health-care market in ways that threaten the government's own solvency and the profitability of every employer in the nation.

Measured in dollars, health care may present the most gargantuan example of unintended consequences in the whole sorry history of modern welfarism. Probably the harm done can never be fully undone. Still, it is possible to lay down the basic principles of a saner future for American health care: put control over health insurance into the hands of the insured, not their employers, and make the costs of insurance visible; get government at all levels out of the business of providing health care for the nonpoor, and get the federal government out of the business of providing health care for the poor.

If the American health-care system remains in its present form, it will, within fifteen more years, bring into existence an enormous voting bloc of retirees utterly dependent on the state for comfort and care in their old age. There is virtually no chance that the era of conservative government promised by the 1994 elections can ensue under those conditions. Hence the health-care argument is more than a technical one, more than an argument about regulations and spending and taxes. If the free-marketeers lose this argument, Medicare and Medicaid will ineluctably bring about a whinier, more dependent culture. If, on the other hand, the free-marketeers win, individual medical-savings accounts will not only make for a better health-care system but will also reinforce the thriftiness, self-reliance, and self-confidence of the American people.

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The Americanization of the Holocaust

Alvin H. Rosenfeld

ALTHOUGH it is far from clear that he actually coined it, the writer Elie Wiesel had a prominent role in popularizing "Holocaust" as the term of choice to designate the Nazi assault against the Jews. In Wiesel's usage and, following him, in that of countless others, the word "Holocaust" points to the sufferings and intended genocide of European Jewry at the hands of the Nazis.

Others, however, have widened the application of this word, in the first instance to include all of those who perished under the Germans and their allies. Following Simon Wiesenthal, for instance, President Jimmy Carter, speaking on Holocaust Remembrance Day in Washington in 1979, referred to eleven million victims, among them six million Jews and five million non-Jews. And more recently, the language of "Holocaust" has been widened still further; now it is regularly invoked by people who want to draw public attention to human-rights abuses, social inequalities suffered by racial and ethnic minorities and women, environmental disasters, AIDS, and a whole host of other things.

Among opponents of this tendency, the Israeli scholar Yehuda Bauer has spoken out perhaps most strongly, arguing that "in the public mind the term 'Holocaust' has become flattened," so that "any evil that befalls anyone anywhere becomes a Holocaust." Tracing the causes of this development, Bauer points to a dilemma faced by those who created the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.: "It was unclear," Bauer writes, "how the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its universalist implications could be combined in a way that would be in accord with the American heritage and American political reality." Bauer does not spell out what he means by "American political reality," but it does not require a vivid imagination to fill in the blanks.

MICHAEL BERENBAUM, director of the museum's research institute, has taken issue with Bauer, writing that the story of the Holocaust "had to be told in such a way that it would resonate not only with the survivor in New York and his children in San Francisco, but with a black leader from Atlanta, a Midwestern farmer, or a Northeastern industrialist." Connecting such a diverse audience to history, in Berenbaum's view, meant finding a way to "inform their current reality," including what he calls their current "social need."

The social needs of the different American types that Berenbaum lists, however, are of a diverse sort, and there are a good many more types than the ones he enumerates. One wonders how any story of the crimes of the Nazi era can both remain faithful to the specific features of those events and at the same time address contemporary American social and political agendas in all their multiplicity. Berenbaum's formula for resolving such potential problems is to recognize that while the Holocaust was a unique event, it carries universal implications.

That is no doubt the case. Yet as others have developed their own understandings of the formula, the "uniqueness" of the Holocaust has begun to yield some of its priority to what are taken to be its wider metaphorical ramifications. According to its own director of communications, for example, the Holocaust Museum's ultimate goal is an "*en-masse* understanding that we are not about what the Germans did to Jews but what people did to people." If the Washington museum ever explicitly adopts so broad a mission, it will cease to be a museum devoted to educating the public about the Nazi Holocaust and become something else.

We need not wonder what that "something else" would look like, for it is already upon us at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. As Edward Norden has noted in these pages, * by situating the Holocaust within a historical framework that includes such quintessentially American experiences as the Los Angeles riots and the struggle for black civil rights, the Museum of Tolerance radically relativizes the catastrophe brought on by Nazism. America's social problems, for all of their gravity, are not genocidal in character and simply do not

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* "Yes and No to the Holocaust Museums," August 1993.

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resemble the persecution and systematic slaughter of Europe's Jews during World War II. To mingle the victims of these very different historical experiences, therefore, is to metamorphose the Nazi Holocaust into that empty and all but meaningless abstraction, "man's inhumanity to man."

This tendency has, in fact, been prominent right from the start in American understandings of the Holocaust. But today it is growing exponentially, especially within those segments of American culture intent on developing a politics of identity based on victim status and the grievances that come with it. The rhetoric of "oppression" has become a commonplace of contemporary American political, academic, and artistic discourse, and its exponents frequently take recourse to the signs and symbols of the Nazi Holocaust to describe what they see as their own "victimization" within American society.

To cite one egregious example among many, consider the feminist artist Judy Chicago. Chicago (née Gerowitz) claims descent from 23 generations of rabbis, but until the age of forty-five, as she freely admits, she knew virtually nothing about either Judaism or the Holocaust. Now she has produced an installation entitled the *Holocaust Project*, which combines her own work in several media with that of her husband, the photographer Donald Woodman.

The *Holocaust Project* had its opening at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago in the fall of 1993 and is slated for shows at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, the Los Angeles branch of the Hebrew Union College, and elsewhere. Those who do not actually get to see the photo-paintings, tapestries, and stained-glass productions that make up the exhibit can consult an illustrated volume, also entitled *Holocaust Project*, which carries colored plates of the art work along with numerous preliminary sketches, historical and contemporary photographs, excerpts from the artists' readings, and a detailed and highly revealing personal journal that Chicago kept as she set out to educate herself about her subject.

Her search extended over a period of six or seven years and took Chicago and her husband on trips to former camp sites and other places of wartime interest in France, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, Latvia, and Lithuania. To make the "Holocaust experience" her own, as it were, Chicago did some things that went well beyond ordinary tourist behavior. Thus, during a visit to the former Natzweiler/Struthof concentration camp in France, she had herself photographed lying down on one of the long iron shovels that had been used to feed the bodies of victims into the flames of the crematorium oven. The large picture of her stretched out and seemingly entering the mouth of the oven is accompanied by a brief explanatory note: "When I lay on the shovel that carried bodies into the crematorium, I realized that, had I lived in Europe during the war, this would probably have happened to me. (Donald is too young.)"

The *Holocaust Project* includes other "revelations" of this order. In translating them into her art work, Chicago was guided by a point of view that, she says, set her and her husband apart from most members of "the Holocaust community." Specifically, Chicago's "more comprehensive approach" situates the Holocaust as one "victim experience" among many, and finds the root of all of these in "the injustice inherent in the global structure of patriarchy and the result of power as it has been defined and enforced by male-dominated societies." Having sighted the enemy and given him his proper name, the artist then set out to make his violence graphic.

The art work itself reflects these emphases and understandings. One finds images of Nazi brutality side by side with images of slavery, atomic warfare, animal vivisection, and evil-looking gynecologists. Women are everywhere abused, attacked, tormented. A large tapestry entitled *The Fall*, conceptualized along the lines of a "battle of the sexes," depicts naked women being attacked by knife-wielding men while other women are burned alive. In this same piece, a black slave plows furrows into the weeping earth-mother; a gaunt Jesus-like figure hangs helplessly in the background; other men wield bloody swords or feed people into the flaming ovens; and still others flay the hides of pigs and women hung side by side on a rack. In the middle of this torment is a reworking of Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*, which, an explanatory note tells us, is meant to show that the Holocaust had its true origin in "that moment in human history when men consolidated patriarchal power through force."

The last piece, entitled *Rainbow Shabbat*, is a departure, intended to close the exhibit on a prayerful note, "an invocation for human awakening and global transformation." A large stained-glass production, it depicts twelve people around a Sabbath table. At one end of the table stands a woman, covered in a traditional prayer shawl, blessing the candles. At the other end, a man, also in a prayer shawl, is offering the traditional blessing over wine. Seated around the table are representatives of the world's people—an Arab in a kaffiyeh, a Christian minister or priest with a large crucifix dangling on a chain beneath his clerical collar, Vietnamese, blacks, women, children, assorted whites. The ten people all face away from the man and toward the woman; although their faces are expressionless, they have their arms about one another and seem to fall within the embrace of the praying woman's outstretched arms, giving us to understand that all is now well with the world or soon will be. Rainbow colors fill out the table scene from top to bottom,

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and on flanking side panels a large Jewish star, also surrounded by these bright colors, is inscribed with words that end the *Holocaust Project* on a prayerful note: "Heal those broken souls who have no peace and lead us all from darkness into light."

ATROCIOUS as it is both conceptually and visually, Judy Chicago's version of the Holocaust embodies a number of trends that inform the American cultural and political mood today. It is no news that we live in an age marked by narcissistic indulgences of a relentless sort. In such a time, everything is drawn back to the self and its desires, the self and its needs, the self and its pains. Combine this extreme emphasis on subjectivity with an increasingly intrusive political correctness and you get not only a production like the *Holocaust Project* but many another invocation of the Holocaust dragged emblematically into contemporary American debates over AIDS, abortion, child abuse, gay rights, the rights of immigrant aliens, etc. All are victims, and all are being readied for extermination.

But the cult of victimhood is only one typological strand in the Americanization of the Holocaust. Another, no less sentimental, derives from a seemingly opposite trait: the American tendency to downplay or deny the dark and brutal sides of life and to place a preponderant emphasis on the saving power of individual moral conduct and collective deeds of redemption. This tendency could be seen at work as far back as the 50's in the uplifting "twist" given to the stage and screen versions of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl.*

First published in English translation in 1952, *The Diary of a Young Girl* remains one of the best-known and best-loved stories of World War II. The book was made into a popular play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett and produced on Broadway in 1955; four years later it was screened as an equally popular full-length film. The book, the play, and the film remain in circulation to this day—a "definitive" new edition of *The Diary* is now on the best-seller lists—and it is fair to say that more Americans are familiar with Anne Frank's story than with any other single narrative of the war years.

The Diary of a Young Girl is also widely read in American schools, and American youngsters regularly see the stage and film versions as well. Their teachers encourage them to identify with Anne Frank and to write stories, essays, and poems about her. Some even see her as a kind of saint and pray to her. During their early adolescent years, many American girls view her story as their story, her fate as somehow bound up with their fate.

What is it that defines Anne Frank's image for people in this country, and why have they come to cherish it so? There is a vague understanding that she was a Jew and for this reason also a victim, but the stage and film translations of her diary do not make her appear "too Jewish," nor do they make her status as a victim too unbearably harsh.

It is notable, for instance, that at no time during the play does a Nazi soldier or Gestapo agent ever appear on the stage. Although the play has its anxious moments, these are never fixed visually on those who actually pursued Anne Frank and her family in their hiding places and made them into victims. Rather, anxiety builds toward a fate that is carefully kept hidden from the audience, which is spared any direct confrontation with Nazi violence. Consequently, one can leave the theater feeling uplifted by Anne Frank's story rather than deeply disturbed.

The early reviews of the Broadway production of the diary registered these feelings in unambiguous ways. Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune* about the play's debut at the Cort Theater, Walter Kerr had this to say:

> Nearly all of the characters in *The Diary of Anne Frank* . . . are doomed to death. Yet the precise quality of the new play at the Cort is the quality of glowing, ineradicable life—life in its warmth, its wonder, its spasms of anguish, and its wild and flaring humor.

Kerr was echoed by William Hawkins in the *New York World Telegram and Sun* ("One leaves the theater exhilarated, proud to be a human being"); by John Beaufort in the *Christian Science Monitor* ("endows the deeper grief of its subject with a shining and even triumphant humanity"); and Richard Watts in the *New York Post* ("an inspiring drama, not a wrathful one").

These reviews, and numerous others like them, reveal the terms in which Americans of the mid-1950's were prepared to confront the Holocaust: a terrible event, yes, but ultimately not tragic or depressing; an experience shadowed by the specter of a cruel death, but at the same time not without the ability to inspire, console, uplift. And still today, among those who come to know Anne Frank through the pages of her diary or the stage or screen versions of it, responses are remarkably similar. Thus, Harry James Cargas, a contemporary American literary scholar and theologian, has recently written: "Each time I read the *Diary* I am uplifted. Anne's spirit gives me hope. Each time I read the *Diary* I cannot help but feel that this time she'll make it, she'll survive."

She did not survive, as we know, but went to her death in Bergen-Belsen before she was even sixteen years old. Nevertheless, the survival fantasy that was triggered in Cargas's encounter with Anne Frank is common. Who, after all, wants to stare into the abyss and discover only blackness? Consequently, Americans are typically given stories and images of the Nazi Holocaust that turn upward at the end, as in Anne's signature line

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from the stage production, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." (To which her father replies, humbly and affectionately, "She puts me to shame.")

It is on a similar note that Gerald Green ended the NBC mini-series, *Holocaust*; that William Styron chose to end his popular novel, *Sophie's Choice*; and that Steven Spielberg ends his extravagantly acclaimed film, *Schindler's List*. In each of these instances and others like them, it is almost a general requirement that audiences not be subjected to unrelenting pain. Indeed, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum itself partakes of this orientation, as when it reminds prospective new members that it is physically situated near "the great American monuments to democracy" on the National Mall, so that departing visitors can quickly reestablish themselves in the familiar and consoling realities of American space.

THE determination to look on the bright side of things—the mirror image, as I have noted, of the cult of universal victimhood—has been responsible lately for the emergence of two new Holocaust "types": the survivor and the rescuer.

For a number of years following the end of World War II, relatively little public attention was paid to those who had managed to survive the Nazi assault against European Jewry and resettle in the United States. Their status was that of the "D.P.," the "immigrant," the "war refugee," or the "greenhorn," and attitudes toward them were hardly adulatory. Generous-hearted people did what they could to help, others more or less ignored them. Throughout the late 1940's and well into the 50's, a prevalent attitude was to put all of "that" behind one and get on with life.

Here is how the sociologist William Helmreich describes the situation:

> Most immigrants quickly learned not to talk about the war, often rationalizing their reluctance by saying that the stories were too horrible to be believed. Americans frequently responded to such stories with accounts of how they too had undergone privation during the war, mostly food rationing. Moritz Felberman [a survivor] was told by his aunt: "If you want to have friends here in America, don't keep talking about your experiences. Nobody's interested and if you tell them, they're going to hear it once and then the next time they'll be afraid to come see you. Don't ever speak about it."

Just when this period of relative muteness ended is hard to say, but beginning in the mid-to-late 60's and up to the present day a radical change of attitude has taken place, so much so that today the "survivor" is a much-honored figure and, in some instances, enjoys something close to celebrity status.

As survivors, these aging men and women are frequently sought as platform speakers at commemorative programs and other public occasions during the year, and sizable audiences are likely to turn out to hear them tell their tales. Survivor memoirs have been published in large volume and by now constitute a significant sub-genre of Holocaust literature. In addition, institutions like the Fortunoff Video Archives at Yale University have engaged in ambitious efforts to interview the aging witnesses and get their stories on tape while it is still possible to do so.

In short, the survivor now enjoys a greatly heightened public profile and carries about him an aura that solicits honor, respect, fascination, and no small degree of awe. The novelist Leon Uris has recently stated the case forthrightly: "These men and women are to be looked upon with wonderment." And so, increasingly, they are.

It should be noted that this is due in no small part to their own efforts. Many of those who managed to survive the ghettos, camps, and assorted hiding places of Nazi-occupied Europe have dedicated themselves energetically and successfully to seeing to it that their stories are preserved for future generations. Without their extraordinary commitment there would be no United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, no video archives, no endowed chairs at American colleges and universities for the teaching of the Holocaust. And who can forget that it was a survivor, Elie Wiesel himself, who in the spring of 1985, with the world's television cameras recording the moment, dared to tell the President of his country that it was "not your place" to travel to Germany to join Prime Minister Kohl for ceremonies at a military cemetery?

The newly-found strength, self-confidence, and self-assertion of survivors may have reached a high point just last year, when, during the Academy Awards ceremony, Branko Lustig, himself a survivor, and Steven Spielberg stepped before a vast, appreciative television audience and, in the name of the survivors as well as of "the six million," accepted their Oscars as producer and director of *Schindler's List*.

Schindler's List is a film that celebrates survivors—specifically, the 1,100 Jews snatched from a gruesome death. It is also, more pertinently, a film that celebrates the other newly salient figure of the Holocaust: the rescuer. For we are in an age which has elevated to heroism not the Jewish victims of Nazism, and not even the Jewish resistance movement, but "righteous Gentiles," "helpers," "liberators," "rescuers," and "saviors," the ones who managed to exemplify virtue during a time when basic human goodness was otherwise hardly to be found.

In this regard, it is notable that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is situated directly on Raoul Wallenberg

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Place, a designation rich in symbolic implication. And thanks to Steven Spielberg's film, the Swedish hero Wallenberg has now been joined among the "righteous of the nations" by the German Oskar Schindler. The attention focused on Schindler's deeds, moreover, has had the effect of renewing or creating interest in the stories of others who acted similarly—Aristedes de Sousa Mendes, Sempo Sugihara, Hermann Graebe, Miep Gies, Pastor André Trocmé, the people of Le Chambon, the Danes.

Each of these risked life and limb to protect and save Jews during the war. While their numbers were not huge, their actions were clearly exemplary. But the question lingers: how central are these "moral heroes" to the larger history of the Holocaust?

Schindler's List answers this question forthrightly: rescuers like Schindler were not at the margins but at the precise center of events. Spielberg has in effect repositioned the terms of the Holocaust story; if, as some claim, his film is to be regarded as the definitive treatment of the Holocaust, and if, as others claim, it may actually do more to educate people than all the books on the subject combined, it has achieved these ends as the result of a "paradigm shift" of significant proportions.

In general, the Jews in *Schindler's List* are weakly imagined figures, either passive victims of random atrocity or venal collaborators with their persecutors.* In just about every case they are presented as nondescript, anonymous figures or as stereotypes, the men among them associated with money deals and other sorts of scheming and the women as temptresses and seductresses. Itzhak Stern, the only Jewish character developed at any length, is an inflexible, soulless type, a professional bookkeeper whose expression throughout the film rarely changes.

In just about every other respect, however, the Jews in *Schindler's List* are irrelevant to the major drama; and so, in a peculiar way, is Nazism, at least as a political system responsible for particular kinds of human behavior. Instead, the film focuses on two Germans: Amon Goeth, commander of the Plaszow labor camp and the embodiment of limitless evil of a personal or metaphysical rather than of a political kind, and Oskar Schindler. In the contest between the two, it is of course Schindler who prevails and who, at film's end, is properly the recipient of the rescued Jews' gratitude, respect, and love.

This ending takes Schindler and the Jews through two major rites of passage, both of which have about them an aura of the morally sublime, if not indeed of the sacred. Through the presentation of a gold ring, the *Schindlerjuden* in effect "marry" themselves to this man out of heartfelt gratitude for his righteous deeds. And in the final cemetery scene, these same Jews, now elderly, pay their respects to the memory of their savior through the ritualistic placing of tokens of honor and love on his grave.

Both scenes convey tender feelings of affection, respect, and reconciliation—and both scenes project Schindler as a figure defined by overtly Christian symbolism. In the first, he holds forth in a dramatic speech that recalls the Sermon on the Mount; in the second, the camera pans lovingly over the crosses in Jerusalem's Latin Cemetery, coming to rest on the gravesite where Schindler himself is buried. Together, the two scenes bring to culmination the career of a man who, however flawed in character, is nothing short of a saintly hero.

As Michael André Bernstein has observed, *Schindler's List* satisfies "a characteristic American urge to find a redemptive meaning in every event." Yet, although it is the most recent and the most powerfully articulated example of this tendency, it is hardly alone. In a recent book, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, Eva Fogelman states frankly that "people in the 1990's are hungry for role models," and she goes on to propose the rescuers as such models. Indeed, she does not hesitate to define them as the "spiritual heirs to the *lamed vav*—the 36 people of Jewish tradition whose sole task it is, in every generation, . . . to do good for their fellow men."

It was the French writer André Schwarz-Bart who revived popular interest in the *lamed-vav* some 35 years ago in his novel, *The Last of the Just* (1959); but in Schwarz-Bart's presentation, this tradition had reached its point of exhaustion during the time of the Holocaust. Now there is an effort to revive it. Another French novelist, Marek Halter, has just completed a full-length film, *Tzedek*, which presents the stories of 36 righteous Gentiles who rescued Jews. At least a half-dozen books on Raoul Wallenberg have appeared since the early 1980's, and new titles on Oskar Schindler are already reaching American bookstores. All told, since 1980 at least 40 films and 35 books have related stories of Christian rescue of Jews.

In 1984, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council sponsored a major conference entitled "Faith in Humankind: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust." Since then, smaller conferences have been held elsewhere on the same theme. The Altruistic Personality Project has run programs and sponsored publications on this motif, and other initiatives such as Friends of Le Chambon, Thanks to Scandinavia, and Tribute to the Danes direct attention to rescue efforts of a more specifically regional kind. Seen within this context, Steven Spielberg's film, far from being

* For a fuller discussion of this point, see Philip Gourevitch, "A Dissent on *Schindler's List*," Commentary, February 1994.

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exceptional, is the culmination of something that has been developing for a number of years now.

The person who has done the most to advance this theme is Rabbi Harold N. Schulweis. In 1963, on the heels of the Eichmann trial, Schulweis founded the Institute of Righteous Acts at the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley, California. Some twenty years later he went on to establish the Jewish Foundation of Christian Rescuers, now an integral part of the Anti-Defamation League's International Center for Holocaust Studies. In addition, Schulweis has written a good deal about the deeds of the "righteous," has published several articles on rescuers, and devotes a full chapter to them in his most recent book, *For Those Who Can't Believe* (1994).

When it comes to recounting the story of the Holocaust, Schulweis maintains that we face a fundamentally ethical question: "How are we to remember without destroying hope?" His answer, not surprisingly, is to look to the "righteous among the nations" as a positive counterweight to what is otherwise an overwhelmingly negative and depressing record of villainy. "There is a moral symmetry in man," Schulweis insists, and to help restore it, we must become newly attentive to the voices of heroism. These figures can serve, for one thing, as a bridge in advancing the aims of Jewish-Christian dialogue. But beyond this, at least in Schulweis's thinking, their goodness has achieved the level of a theological principle.

"Where was *Adonai* [God] in Auschwitz?" Schulweis asks. "Where was the power and mystique of *Adonai* within the hell of the Holocaust?" This is a question raised by numerous religious thinkers in our time, but few if any have answered as Schulweis does:

> *Adonai* was in Nieuvelande, a Dutch village in which 700 residents rescued 500 Jews. . . . *Adonai* was in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, whose citizens hid and protected five thousand Jews. . . . *Adonai* was in the rat-infested sewers of Lvov, where Polish sewer workers hid seventeen Jews. . . . *Adonai* was in Bulgaria . . . in Finland. . . . *Adonai* was with the Italian troops stationed in the southwestern half of Croatia . . . . in Yugoslavia, Greece, southern France, Albania. . . .

The litany goes on and on, an "affirmative" antiphony to that strain of severe religious doubt, if not outright despair, that characterizes much post-Holocaust Jewish religious consciousness. If André Schwarz-Bart came to the melancholy conclusion that the Nazi assault against the Jews had brought an end to the ancient Jewish tradition of the Just, Schulweis, by contrast, not only revives the tradition but, on the basis of its Christian exemplars—multiplied many times 36—actually presumes to locate God *within* the Holocaust.

For Schulweis, "memory of the Holocaust is a sacred act that elicits a double mandate: to expose the depth of evil and to raise goodness from the dust of amnesia." Eva Fogelman has put the same "mandate" in the form of a question: "Every child knows the name of Hitler, but how many know the name of Raoul Wallenberg?"

The fact is, however, that in the American population at large, and not only among children, pitifully little is known about either Hitler or Wallenberg. And even if it were the case that knowledge of the former ran deep and knowledge of the latter were all but absent, the case for "balance" would not be convincing. There was not and can never be any "symmetry" in the historical weights of Hitler and Wallenberg, or Hitler and Schindler, or Hitler and the good people of Le Chambon. The deeds of the righteous are assuredly worthy of remembrance, but by placing them on an almost equal level with the deeds of Hitler and encompassing both within a "double mandate," one thoroughly vitiates any sober understanding of the acts of the murderers, let alone the sufferings of their victims.

There are obvious benefits to such a way of remembering the Holocaust. Religious faith may revive for some, and the tenor of Jewish-Christian dialogue may improve for others. But for most, this exaltation of the "righteous," together with the sentimentalized celebration of survivors, and the eager extension of victim status to any and all comers, may well serve to foster a great complacency about the most harrowing history of this century. The Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld, himself a survivor, has written about rescuers in a manner that restores some much-needed perspective:

> During the Holocaust there were brave Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles who risked their lives to save Jews. But the Holocaust is not epitomized by the greatness of these marvelous individuals' hearts. . . . I say this because survivors sometimes feel deep gratitude to their rescuers and forget that the saviors were few, and those who betrayed Jews to the Nazis were many and evil.

A similar sense of perspective is required in considering the other contemporary distortions introduced by the relentless Americanization of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry.

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Colin Powell's War

Donald Kagan

It is only four years since the sensational victory of the United States and its allies that drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait in a helter-skelter flight for survival after just 100 hours of fighting. At the time, this amazingly brief and successful war seemed to mark the beginning of an era in which the remaining superpower had definitively accepted its responsibility for collective security. The prestige of the United States and its President were extremely high, their prospects for continuing leadership apparently excellent.

Only days after the victory, however, a reporter asked President Bush why he seemed so somber: "Aren't these great days?" The President replied:

> You know, to be very honest with you, I haven't felt this wonderfully euphoric feeling that many of the American people feel. . . . But I think it's that I want to see an end. You mentioned World War II—there was a definitive end to that conflict. And now we have Saddam Hussein still there—the man that wreaked this havoc upon his neighbors.

It did not take long for the President's sense of unease and disappointment to become widespread, and for the general euphoria to fade. He himself was defeated in his bid for reelection, and to a remarkable degree the war has been forgotten. Today, only four years later, Saddam is still in place and still a cause of active concern, not least because of the question of Iraq's nuclear- and biological-weapons capabilities.

The Generals' War, a new book by Michael R. Gordon, a *New York Times* reporter, and General Bernard E. Trainor * tells the story of that conflict, shedding light on why it came about, how it was fought, and why it came to such an incomplete and unsatisfying conclusion. The book takes its place alongside what is still the best scholarly account of the war, *The Gulf Conflict* by Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh (1992), and such popular treatments as Bob Woodward's *The Commanders*. But *The Generals' War* also introduces much new evidence, most of it in the form of interviews with participants in the policy decisions and in the action itself—military and civilian, Americans, allies, and enemies.

There are problems in using such conversations, all of which took place after the war was over. Many are anonymous; the book cites such sources as "current and former administration officials," "senior intelligence official," and "Iraqi Shiite leaders." These citations put a heavy burden of trust on the reader. And even in the case of those who are named, it is a notorious fact that the memories of participants are imperfect and tend to be self-serving. Still, future historians will find *The Generals' War* useful, and the rest of us have much to learn from it.

The authors regard the conflict in the Gulf as a war that need not have happened, "a stunning failure of America's policy of trying to deter war." The available evidence supports that view.

Since 1984, the United States had befriended Iraq as a counterweight against Iran, its larger, potentially more powerful, and virulently anti-American neighbor. We had favored and assisted Iraq in its war against Iran, and we persisted in that policy thereafter. We did this even though we understood that Saddam Hussein was ambitious and something of a rogue.

Saddam was a military dictator who repressed his own people, especially the Kurdish minority, against whom he had used chemical weapons. He was evading the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and was attempting to build his own nuclear arsenal. He was on good terms with the Soviet Union, having acquired most of his military equipment from that source, and he had amassed the largest army in the region, reckoned by some to be the fourth largest in the world. He was bitterly hostile to Israel, America's ally.

American policy, nonetheless, was to avoid confrontation with Saddam, to maintain good relations, and to continue supplying him with credits, grain, and even the high technology that could be used for sophisticated weapons. The policy was based on the assumptions that Iraq was still needed to balance Iran and that, in the words of Bush's National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, it was possible "to make this guy a reason-

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* Little, Brown, 551 pp., $27.95.

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ably responsible member of the international community."*

But Saddam was not inclined to be reasonable. He was badly short of money and deeply in debt, in particular to Kuwait, which insisted on repayment. To meet his needs he wanted the OPEC states to reduce oil production in order to raise the price, which had dropped considerably in recent years. The leaders of Kuwait, however, demurred. And apart from these considerations, there was a quarrel between Iraq and Kuwait over the control of some islands in the Gulf.

In July 1990, Saddam launched a diplomatic assault on Kuwait, outlining a variety of "grievances," and began to mass large numbers of troops and tanks along the border between the two countries. He demanded, according to Freedman and Karsh in *The Gulf Conflict*,

> the raising of oil prices to over $25 a barrel; the cessation of Kuwaiti "theft" of oil from the Iraqi Rumailia oilfield and the return of the $2.4 billion "stolen" from Iraq; a complete moratorium on Iraq's wartime loans; the formation of "an Arab plan similar to the Marshall Plan to compensate Iraq for some of the losses during the war [against Iran]."

The U.S. responded by stating that it would support "the sovereignty and integrity of the Gulf states" and by insisting "that disputes be settled peacefully and not by threats and intimidations." But it did not regard Iraq's efforts as aimed at war. When the U.S. ambassador, April Glaspie, was called to see Saddam, she kept up the conciliatory policy her government had all along been pursuing. Saddam, as Freedman and Karsh tell it, treated her to some tough talk:

> "If you use pressure we will deploy pressure and force. We cannot come all the way to you in the United States but individual Arabs may reach you." To emphasize his point, he observed that the Americans lacked Iraq's readiness to lose 10,000 men in a day's combat.

YET Ambassador Glaspie remained conciliatory, assuring Saddam that she had direct instructions from the President to try to improve relations. Although Congress had tried to impose economic sanctions, the administration had blocked them. As for the setting of oil-production quotas, this, she said, was strictly a matter for the Arabs: Saddam's insistence that Kuwait should not exceed them deserved Arab support. Finally, although the American view was that disputes must be settled peacefully, the United States had no opinion on the quarrel between Iraq and Kuwait over the border between them. Freedman and Karsh conclude: "The natural interpretation for Saddam to put on this, especially in the light of his opening harangue, was that the United States was still offering him a hand of friendship while urging him to be good."

There seems little doubt that the weakness of American policy, "combining threats with appeasement," encouraged Saddam to move. The threats came chiefly from Congress and the appeasement from the administration. Asked by a Congressman what would happen if the Iraqis crossed into Kuwait, a State Department official replied that the United States would be very concerned but that it was under no treaty obligations to use force. Yet Congress itself was hardly tigerish on the issue; it did not support any action beyond economic sanctions. In short, Saddam had good reason to believe that the United States would not get in his way.

The Bush administration's refusal to acknowledge the failure of its efforts to moderate Iraq's behavior is only part of the story, however. *The Generals' War* also blames General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a powerful force in shaping American diplomatic as well as military strategy. The authors describe Powell as a "new breed of American commander," skillful in dealing with Congress and the media, "wise in the ways of Washington." Legislation passed in 1986 had given the chairman new powers and Powell exploited them fully, "wielding power and influence beyond that exercised by any previous chairman." In the crisis leading up to the Gulf war he was the overwhelmingly dominant military figure, and once the war started his influence over the civilians who were ostensibly making policy decisions was formidable.

According to the authors of *The Generals' War*, the chief determinant of Powell's thinking was the American defeat in Vietnam, and these were the lessons he took from it:

> If force was to be used, it should be overwhelming, and its application should be decisive and preferably short. Military intervention should not be undertaken unless the outcome was all but guaranteed. The aims in using force needed to be precisely defined beforehand, and as soon as they were achieved American forces should be quickly extracted, lest the Pentagon slide into a quagmire. American casualties had to be held to a minimum.

To be sure, these ideas formed the conventional post-Vietnam wisdom of most of the Army's leadership, but the chairman held them so strongly that in the Pentagon they were called the "Powell Doctrine." So deep was Powell's influence in the preliminaries to the war, in its conduct, and in its conclusion that in *The Generals' War* he emerges as the largest and most important character.

ON AUGUST 2, 1990 the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait with a force much greater than was needed for easy conquest. The invasion was a textbook case of aggression, which even Iraq's friends did not try to defend. American interests were also very much involved.

* Quoted in A.L. George, *Bridging the Gap* (1993).

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A key to the crisis was oil. With Kuwait in his hands, Saddam Hussein controlled 20 percent of the world's known oil reserves. If he were to proceed to take over Saudi Arabia as well, that percentage would double. Even if he only overawed the Saudis, as his control of Kuwait would surely do, he could count on a dominant voice in the councils of OPEC and the policies it pursued.

Those opposed to the use of force during the crisis frequently trivialized the issue of oil, saying it simply masked a desire on the part of the United States and its allies to keep the price low. But its true importance was as an element of a grand strategy. Any state controlling so large a percentage of the world's petroleum could wield a powerful economic weapon for political purposes. With the wealth he would acquire, Saddam could build an even larger and more powerful army, equipped with the latest weapons. This would change overnight the political balance in the Middle East, compelling the moderate Arab states loosely aligned with the United States to join the side of turmoil. The prospects would then grow for a serious war in the region in which the United States would be at a disadvantage, without friends or bases.

William Hyland, then editor of *Foreign Affairs* and a former Deputy National Security Adviser, painted a persuasive and alarming picture:

> The Saudis would be looking down a gun barrel. And we would be asking for an Arab-Israeli war in five years in which nuclear weapons would probably be used by both sides. . . . The issue is this: can we tolerate the continued existence of Saddam Hussein with his military machine intact? *

Lawrence Eagleburger, Deputy Secretary of State at the time, also pointed out that the Iraqi aggression would set "all the wrong standards for the post-cold-war world—telling local dictators that now the rules of the game might have changed to make it possible to get away with aggression." It was, in short, plain that aggression in the Middle East was bound to entangle the United States.

But America's military leaders did not seem to grasp any of this. After the invasion, Powell was reluctant to use military force to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. He and General Norman Schwartzkopf, as well as previous chairmen of the Joint Chiefs, favored economic sanctions, and he was willing to wait as long as two years to make them work. (In this he was joined by Senator Sam Nunn and many congressional Democrats.)

At the first meeting of the National Security Council after the invasion, Powell is quoted by Bob Woodward in *The Commanders* as having asked: "'Don't we want just to draw a firm line with Saudi Arabia?'" As the form of the question makes clear, it was a suggestion rather than an inquiry. Powell, according to Woodward, "said he saw the issue as deterrence—stopping Saddam from coming into Saudi Arabia." From that moment until he was forced to abandon it, "containment" of Saddam within Kuwait was the policy he favored.

This judgment would seem to suffer from an almost incredible strategic innocence. We now know that Saddam already had stocks of chemical and biological weapons, and was making rapid progress toward the acquisition of nuclear ones. Drawing the line at Saudi Arabia would have left Saddam with his ill-gotten gains earned by flagrant aggression, with his large military force intact, and with his prestige in the Middle East enormously enhanced after having faced down the United States, the West, and the world. For Saddam, it would be a success at least as significant as the remilitarization of the Rhineland had been for Hitler.

Luckily, President Bush, powerfully motivated by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was by now determined to drive Saddam out of Kuwait. His first challenge was to persuade Saudi Arabia to permit the placement there of large numbers of American forces. With Saddam's tanks pointed like a dagger at their heart, the Saudis should have welcomed American protection, but in fact they greeted the offer cautiously. They did not trust America's commitment, fearing (according to Woodward) "that the U.S. might send over some aircraft as a gesture but then not follow it through, thereby leaving the Saudis to face the consequences alone." The Saudi ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar Ibn Sultan, reminded Scowcroft that in 1979, after the fall of the Shah of Iran, President Carter had sent squadrons of F-15's to Saudi Arabia as a gesture of support, only to announce when the planes were halfway over that they were unarmed. Woodward quotes Bandar in effect as saying that "the consequences had been devastating to the Saudis and lived on. Frankly, he said, we're worried. Do you guys have the guts or don't you?"

With considerable effort the Saudis were finally persuaded of American seriousness. But their doubts were in fact justified. As the decision on war drew closer, congressional opposition remained firm. Late in November, the Speaker of the House, Tom Foley, told the President that he needed to wait until the new Congress convened in January before taking any action, and Foley thought it likely that at that point Congress would support economic sanctions for another year. When the President rejected this course, Foley replied, "If after January 15 you decide to go to war, you'll have to come to Congress."

The Senate Majority Leader, George Mitchell, concurred. When James Baker, Bush's Secretary of State, asked if Congress would at least consent to an offensive action that was limited to air power, Mitchell said no. Two weeks earlier, Secre-

* *Washington Post*, December 2, 1990.

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tary of Defense Richard Cheney had likewise met with a group of Congressmen and come away with no promise of support. In Woodward's telling, Cheney "found himself thinking of August 1941, just four months before Pearl Harbor, when the House was able to muster only a one-vote margin for continuing the Selective Service system."

It was chiefly to deal with congressional opposition that Bush agreed on November 30 to go "an extra mile for peace" by offering direct talks with Iraq to achieve a peaceful resolution of the crisis. He would send Baker to Baghdad and would himself meet with Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, in Washington. Baker was the one who had recommended this course of action, which fit his own reluctance to go to war. From the first he had been unhappy about an offensive military action, hoping to resolve matters through diplomacy.

But it was the pressure from the domestic political situation that made Baker's suggestion attractive to the President. By now, the United Nations had authorized the use of force, intensifying public apprehension and congressional opposition. Sam Nunn, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a most powerful figure on defense and military questions, was vigorously against military action, and two former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs were also testifying in Congress against war. Baker's most effective argument (so Woodward writes) was that the President "had to stop the political bleeding."

But the "last-mile-for-peace" initiative alarmed America's allies, who feared it might be the first mile to retreat. As Woodward recounts, Prince Bandar thought that "Americans would never understand Arabs. A peace offering 24 hours after the UN victory [authorizing the use of force] would send precisely the wrong message to Saddam: a message of weakness." Bandar told Scowcroft: "'To you sending Baker is good will; to Saddam it suggests you're chicken.'" His own conclusion was that "Bush and Baker had given Saddam great comfort at what should have been the Iraqi leader's moment of greatest distress."

Bandar was right about Saddam's reaction. "He was ecstatic," in Woodward's phrase. From the first he had sought direct negotiations with the United States, to no avail. Now, just when the UN resolution was putting the greatest pressure on him to retreat, the American offer gave him new courage. "Perhaps he had been right, after all, in telling Ambassador Glaspie . . . that the U.S. did not have 'the stomach' for a costly war." The Iraqi press exulted that Bush's initiative was "a submission to Iraq's demand . . . namely, the need to open a serious dialogue on the region's issues." From Baghdad the BBC reported that, "There's no mistaking the feeling here that President Saddam Hussein has got the Americans on the run."

After some stalling on Saddam's part, and amid great nervousness on the part of America's allies, Baker met Aziz in Geneva on January 9, 1991. No agreement resulted, but the negotiations did serve their political purpose at home. On January 12, Congress voted on a motion authorizing the use of force against Iraq, and it passed in the House by a wide margin, 250 to 183. In the Senate, the vote was 52 to 47; if three Senators had gone the other way, the motion would have lost.

One of the questions that puzzled many at the time was why Saddam seemed willing to risk a war he was bound to lose. Dennis Ross, head of Policy Planning in the State Department, offered an explanation to a reporter in October 1991:

> What I underestimated was his perception of our resolve. He just didn't believe us. He had watched CNN . . . and his concept of the [congressional] debate was that it was a sign of weakness. Debate and dissent meant that we would fall victim the same way we fell victim in Lebanon and the same way we did in Vietnam. . . . He thought we were hamstrung domestically. . . . The reality of what war meant for him didn't sink in until after the bombing [started in January].

Freedman and Karsh come to similar conclusions:

> The problem was not only Saddam's misguided confidence, based on his defensive success against Iran, but also the mixed signals from Washington including the "mile-for-peace" initiative, which came over as reflecting American weakness, in the sense of deteriorating popular support.
>
> Consequently, the administration failed to convince Saddam of the seriousness of its intention. . . . The Iraqi leader remained confident that through a combination of bluster and inducements he might strengthen the peace camp in the West to such an extent that war would be averted.

As Thucydides observed long ago of the Spartans, Saddam turned out to be a convenient enemy. He was given countless opportunities to withdraw and keep his army, weapons, and country intact. Had he pulled out of Kuwait, the United States would have similarly pulled back, and in a while his power would have begun once again to impose itself on the region. By then, the Americans would have been far away and would have found it very hard to rally themselves and their allies for another effort. In short, Saddam and his powerful military apparatus could have remained in place had not his stubborn miscalculation forced the American hand.

Saddam was equally convenient in his conduct of the war. Thirty-eight days of allied devastation affected neither his stubbornness nor his military deployments. The bulk of his forces remained dug in facing Saudi Arabia, while his enemies went around his left flank and through his debili-

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tated and demoralized front line. In four days his army was smashed and routed, suffering heavy casualties.

For weeks before the offensive, American television and newspapers had been filled with dire predictions, often voiced by experienced military officers and others not previously associated with pacifism or the antiwar movement. This war, they said, would be long and hard, the casualties great. There was much talk of body bags, of losses on a disastrous scale. In the event, however, U.S. casualties in battle amounted to 148 dead and 458 wounded; other coalition members suffered 92 dead and 318 wounded. Freedman and Karsh:

> In just over 100 hours, coalition forces captured over 73,700 square kilometers of territory. Fifteen percent of Iraq was under coalition control. The Iraqi army which had been in occupation had been effectively cut to pieces. No more than seven of the original 43 Iraqi divisions were capable of operations. . . . After all the gloomy predictions of thousands of casualties, the total was remarkably small.

The authors of *The Generals' War* take a dimmer view than this of the conduct of the war, and of its conclusion. They find the claims made for the success of American joint operations to be overdrawn, writing that "each service fought its own war." They are critical of the military commanders' estimate of the enemy, which overrated the quality of Iraqi forces and underrated the damage done to them by aerial bombardment. As a result of this miscalculation, they write, there were no plans for dealing with the swift collapse of the Iraqi army, and inadequate plans for cutting off escape. "Like General George Meade at the battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War, Schwartzkopf defeated his enemy, but allowed him to escape to make further mischief."

Bush had compared Saddam Hussein with Hitler, and made his removal from power an aim of the war. Yet at the war's end a considerable part of the Republican Guard—Saddam's best and most loyal troops—had escaped to safety with its tanks, and was thus in condition to preserve the dictator's power and crush the resistance of the Iraqi Shiites, Kurds, and others. The decision to end the fighting was taken, in Washington, before the American ground forces had cut off the escape route of the fleeing Iraqi forces. As Gordon and Trainor write:

> The commanders who knew the most about the battlefield were not asked for their views. . . . Powell and the White House decided to end the war based on initial, fragmentary intelligence reports instead of waiting for a fuller accounting.

According to these authors, the haste to end the war was traceable less to military or diplomatic reasons, or the dictates of international policy, than to considerations of public relations and domestic politics. Powell in particular "was determined that the military would erase the stain of Vietnam and come out of the Gulf war victorious with its honor intact." That meant avoiding casualties, avoiding the appearance of unnecessary killing of Iraqis, and avoiding any involvement in the postwar settlement of Iraq.

All this, however, inevitably resulted in leaving Saddam in power—a nuisance at the very least, and a potential future menace. Ever since the war's end, U.S. planes and UN investigators have been compelled to police Iraqi activities. Gordon and Trainor note some of the consequences:

> Three and a half years later, some of the same Republican Guard forces that Powell thought had been largely destroyed again menaced Kuwait. And in October 1994, some of the same American units that took on the Iraqis in 1991 were ordered back to the Gulf to prevent a possible second Iraqi invasion.

Just this March, two Americans were arrested for crossing the Kuwaiti border and wandering into Iraq's territory and were given harsh jail sentences, apparently as a means of putting pressure on the U.S. to lift the UN's economic sanctions.

RIGHT after the end of the Gulf war it may still have been possible to believe, in the words of Freedman and Karsh, that we had seen "the return of the United States to a self-confident and effective role at the heart of international affairs." But no longer. Desert Storm was *not* the first step in a clear, vigorous, and steady policy of active peacekeeping. The hasty, confused, unsatisfactory conclusion of the war became instead the pattern for a hesitant, confused, and unsatisfactory foreign policy, carried on for the rest of the Bush administration and continued by the Clinton administration.

Ever since the end of the war, the American approach to the world's trouble spots has been marked by the same attitudes that allowed the war to come in the first place, as well as those that helped produce its flawed conclusion. Instead of being the first act in the establishment of a New World Order of peace, the war was the prelude to a period of disorder in such disparate places as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Korea, and Chechnya, among others. It is especially ironic that the American general who opposed the war, who wrongly predicted that it would exact a great cost, and who played a leading role in bringing it to a premature conclusion should have emerged as a major national hero, mentioned as a serious contender for a position on a national ticket and as a possible third-party candidate for President.

Today, potential disrupters of the peace are still unsure how, or whether, the U.S. and its allies will respond to their provocations and, therefore, may be more tempted to take a chance. For that reason alone, Americans need to study the history of the Gulf war and its lessons. *The Generals' War* is a good place to start.

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What Moderate Feminists?

Carol Iannone

To judge by a spate of recent books and articles, there is a new willingness even among self-proclaimed feminists to speak frankly about the errors and excesses of their movement. Christina Hoff Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism,** for example, is an excellent analysis of the damage feminism has wrought in the academy as well as in the culture at large. Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge's *Professing Feminism* (1994) is an even more ringing indictment of academic feminism, insofar as both Patai and Koertge, unlike Sommers, actually taught in the field of Women's Studies for many years themselves, and have now defected in disgust—something, they tell us, that more and more women's-studies professors are doing. And even the well-known feminist philosopher Martha Nussbaum has recently shown a readiness to retreat from the most extreme pronouncements that her academic colleagues have been making over the past years, and to declare at last that the Western philosophical tradition is not hopelessly misogynist but, indeed, the only basis on which feminists themselves can rest their case for greater freedom and equality.

The assumption behind all these reconsiderations is that there is a sound and healthy feminism which has somehow gotten sidetracked, derailed, misappropriated, hijacked by fringe zanies willing to promulgate "falsehoods and exaggerations," in Sommers's words, in order to gain certain political or personal goals.

Thus, Sommers draws a distinction between what she calls equity and gender feminists. Equity feminists, deriving from the "classically liberal" tradition, offered "women a liberal version of consciousness-raising whose aim was to awaken them to new possibilities of individual self-fulfillment." Sommers argues that the contemporary women's movement in its earliest days was built on this model. But, she writes,

> by the mid-70's, . . . the old style of consciousness-raising . . . rapidly gave way to one that initiated women into an appreciation of their subordinate situation in the patriarchy and the joys and comforts of group solidarity.

These new gender feminists, who now rule the movement, "believe that all our institutions, from the state to the family to the grade schools, perpetuate male dominance," and their view that the "personal is political" makes them "impatient with piecemeal liberal reformist solutions and leads [them] to strive for a more radical transformation of our society than earlier feminists had envisioned."

This is a nice, neat formulation which at the very least serves the purpose of allowing some criticism of some aspects of a movement whose fundamental premises—that our society's treatment of women was/is unfair, unjust, inequitable, and that the standard feminist remedies were/are self-evidently right and proper—no longer seem even to be a matter of debate. The problem, however, is that the idea that the contemporary women's movement began in moderation and was then deflected and corrupted by a turn toward radicalism cannot survive critical scrutiny.

Take Betty Friedan, the "godmother" of equity feminism for Sommers and many others. Looking back at her writings, and especially her most famous and influential book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), we soon see that Friedan "godmothered" the movement in more ways than one. While it is true that she did not deploy the quasi-Marxist jargon of oppression, gender antagonism, and patriarchy that would later dominate feminist discourse, she did inaugurate the pattern of hyperbole that came to fuel the movement after her. It was she who managed to make the condition of the postwar American woman seem one of soul-strangling asphyxiation and spiritual death. Indeed, for Friedan, submitting to the traditional feminine role was nothing less than an embrace of nonbeing:

> It is urgent to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, nonexistence, nothingness, in women. There are aspects of the housewife role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity, the firm core of self or "I" without which a human being, man or woman, is not truly alive.

It was also Friedan who helped initiate the now ever-expanding tendency to blame the most personal and complex of the ills of life on social or political conditions, and to remove them from the realm of individual moral character (thereby abetting our transformation into a society of victims and "survivors"). On the basis of very little hard evidence, she identified "the problem that has no name"—that is, the malaise and

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discontent among some educated upper-middle-class housewives—and blew it up into something of massive proportions urgently demanding society-wide solutions.

And it was Friedan who helped define that useful paradox so beloved by activist leaders, whereby unhappiness, anger, frustration can be seen as signs of *health*, inasmuch as these reflect a rejection of the status quo, in this case the bitter void to which women were consigned. (This conceit persists in a great many films and plays, like *Plenty* and *Tom and Viv*, about neurotic bitches whose very neurosis supposedly bespeaks greater authenticity than that possessed by the walking dead around them.)

From this premise, Friedan launched like a booster rocket into her biggest hyperbole of all:

> In a sense that is not as far-fetched as it sounds, the women who "adjust" as housewives, who grow up wanting to be "just a housewife," are in as much danger as the millions who walked to their own death in the concentration camps—and the millions more who refused to believe that the concentration camps existed.

What follows must be quoted in all its demented detail to be believed:

> In fact, there is an uncanny, uncomfortable insight into why a woman can so easily lose her sense of self as a housewife in certain psychological observations made of the behavior of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. In these settings, purposely contrived for the dehumanization of man, the prisoners literally became "walking corpses." Those who "adjusted" to the conditions of the camps surrendered their human identity and went almost indifferently to their deaths. Strangely enough, the conditions which destroyed the human identity of so many prisoners were not the torture and the brutality, but conditions similar to those which destroy the identity of the American housewife.
>
> In the concentration camps the prisoners were forced to adopt childlike behavior, forced to give up their individuality and merge themselves into an amorphous mass. Their capacity for self-determination, their ability to predict the future and to prepare for it, was systematically destroyed. It was a gradual process which occurred in virtually imperceptible stages—but at the end, with the destruction of adult self-respect, of an adult frame of reference, the dehumanizing process was complete. . . .
>
> To old prisoners [those who had been imprisoned for some time], the world of the camp was the only reality. They were reduced to childlike preoccupation with food, elimination, the satisfaction of primitive bodily needs; they had no privacy, and no stimulation from the outside world. . . .
>
> It was said, finally, that not the SS but the prisoners themselves became their own worst enemy. Because they could not bear to see their situation as it really was—because they denied the very reality of their problem, and finally "adjusted" to the camp itself as if it were the only reality—they were caught in the prison of their own minds. . . .
>
> All this seems terribly remote from the easy life of the American suburban housewife. But is not her house in reality a comfortable concentration camp? Have not women who live in the image of the feminine mystique trapped themselves within the narrow walls of their homes? They have learned to "adjust" to their biological role. They have become dependent, passive, childlike; they have given up their adult frame of reference to live at the lower human level of food and things. The work they do does not require adult capabilities; it is endless, monotonous, unrewarding. American women are not, of course, being readied for mass extermination, but they are suffering a slow death of mind and spirit.

Despite the qualification in that last sentence, Friedan ultimately does not shy away even from that aspect of the analogy:

> If we continue to produce millions of young mothers who stop their growth and education short of identity, we are committing quite simply genocide, starting with the mass burial of American women and ending with the progressive dehumanization of their sons and daughters.

Given all this, the fact that Friedan, in a colloquy in the 70's, defended a woman's right to choose the homemaker role against Simone de Beauvoir's insistence to the contrary does not really amount to much. Indeed, what the exchange between de Beauvoir and Friedan illustrates more than anything else is the marriage of liberalism and radicalism in our time, in which liberalism offers a cover of moderation to radical ideas. While the liberal gives lip service to things he is actually if not always consciously seeking to destroy, the radical is more open and honest; at the same time, the radical's views are really what supply energy to the liberal.

So it was here: for women, the shift away from the primacy of the homemaker's role was as radical a shift as there could be, and it set the stage for all the feminist radicalism that was to follow. To those who argue that this derived from economic necessity rather than ideology, we might ask why feminists did not demand measures, like higher tax exemptions for children, which might have bolstered the homemaker role for women who wished to choose it even in the face of financial pressure. But feminism was never interested in facilitating that choice. What it really wanted was to make the full-time homemaker role seem fit only for subhumans and to force women into "careers," or, as would be the case in so many instances, into the job market.

And here too it was Friedan who set the prescriptive tone of feminist proposals that we hear to this day:

> A massive attempt must be made by educators and parents—and ministers, magazine editors, manipulators, guidance counselors—to stop the early-marriage movement, stop girls from growing up wanting to be just a housewife.

In a recent article in *Academic Questions*, John Ellis points out that high infant mortality, lower life expectancy, more primitive

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technology, and the necessity of having children to provide for old age all acted to make motherhood the primary focus of most women in the past. As I can testify from the experiences of my own family, these conditions persisted even through much of this century. My grandmother died in childbirth at twenty-seven; my great-grandmother lost six of the twelve children she brought to birth; her daughter, one of my great aunts, lost four of eight; another of her daughters, my step-grandmother, unable to have children herself, was grateful for her two stepdaughters, my mother and my aunt.

As circumstances changed for women, largely thanks to "patriarchal" constructs like technology and medicine that feminism often deplores, new opportunities became possible. It is Ellis's contention that these improvements allowed women more freedom from the biological role, and in this he is certainly right.

Yet, in truth, that freedom may be overstated even today. For the real reason that women seem to have so much time today to give to jobs and careers, leading them to decry what they see as female subjugation in past eras, is that as a society we have managed to convince ourselves that children no longer require the care and attention it was once thought they did.* Far from being an established truth, however, the spread of this idea has been accompanied in our country by a worsening of children's lives on every count—poorer academic performance and higher rates of teenage pregnancy, venereal disease, accidents, suicide, homicide, mental illness.

If a movement begins from false premises, what else but falsehoods can ensue, together with determined exercise of power, coercion, and control—of the kind Patai and Koertge show are widespread in Women's Studies—to keep the falsehoods going? In this light, the excesses presented by Sommers and Patai and Koertge are not at all surprising. Why—to cite only one example of many—should not people believe that 150,000 women die of anorexia every year (without proof and contrary to common sense, since such numbers would mean we would be burying a skeletal teenager every week); is this not of a piece with the rhetorical picture of women's lot painted by feminists from the beginning?

Contemporary feminism could not have worked without such falsehoods and exaggerations, for the simple reason that the situation of women in America is not that bad today and was never that bad even in the pre-feminist past. American women are not comparable to women in the third world or during the Middle Ages, let alone to inmates of Nazi concentration camps. Even at the time *The Feminine Mystique* was published, American women were living in a degree of freedom, comfort, and prosperity probably unequaled in the history of womankind since Eve (before her unfortunate expulsion from the garden). And today, of course, they probably have more power and privilege of various kinds than women ever commanded before.

ONE place where all these repressed truths seem to be surfacing—not surprisingly in a perverse form—is in recent films like *Body Heat, Disclosure,* and *The Last Seduction.* These movies suggest that women are using both feminist and feminine wiles to advance selfish and even evil agendas, to gain advantages over men in ways that are dishonest, treacherous, and hideously destructive. The appeal of such films may lie in the opportunity they offer to see the part of the picture that feminism wants to leave out—that men are not the only villains, that women too can be wicked, that men are not the only ones with power, that women have powers of their own, including the ability to prey on men's vulnerability to them.

Such films perhaps suggest an answer to some of Betty Friedan's more philosophical musings. "For human suffering there is a reason," she once pondered, and "perhaps the reason has not been found because the right questions have not been asked, or pressed far enough." Perhaps. On the other hand, perhaps the questions are being pressed too far. As she herself wrote in the 1974 edition of *The Feminine Mystique,* "It was easier for me to start the women's movement which was needed to change society than to change my own personal life."

Indeed.

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* See "Putting Children Last" by Mary Eberstadt in the May COMMENTARY.—ED.

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Claude Lanzmann and the IDF

Hillel Halkin

Tsahal, the French director Claude Lanzmann's five-hour movie about the Israeli army that recently closed after a brief run in New York and Israel, is a disappointment, although not necessarily—as most of its Israeli critics seemed to think—because it is too appreciative of its subject.

Both cinematically and thematically, *Tsahal* (the Hebrew name for Israel's army, an acronym formed from *Tsva Haganah Leyisrael,* the Israel Defense Force or IDF) is a sequel to Lanzmann's ten-hour *Shoah* (1985), an extraordinary documentary about the Holocaust. Like *Shoah,* it eschews all previous documentary footage and consists largely of interviews with people recollecting the past; and like *Shoah,* too, it proceeds slowly and with enormous patience, its camera often resting on its interviewees' faces for long periods of silence while they struggle with their emotions or seek to phrase or collect their thoughts. *Tsahal* also follows *Shoah* in counterpointing such interviews with lengthy visual meditations on still landscapes and moving vehicles—in *Shoah* these are of trains and the Polish countryside, while in *Tsahal* they are mostly of desert and tanks—which serve as a brooding commentary on the halting words of men.

But the same techniques that worked so powerfully in *Shoah* tend to leave the viewer of *Tsahal* unmoved and impatient to move on. Most of the Holocaust survivors interviewed in *Shoah* seemed to be narrating the details of their stories for the first time, thus creating a tense conflict between the need to tell and the impossibility of telling that Lanzmann recorded in each slight tremor and hesitation, refusing to lift his camera's siege until the last memory had been surrendered. In *Tsahal,* there is little of this; although the soldiers and ex-soldiers appearing in it sometimes reminisce about difficult moments in battle, these do not strike one as virgin memories, and Lanzmann himself, more affable and less relentless than in *Shoah,* has not stalked them with the same gentle implacability that he exhibited there.

Perhaps if he had, and if he had stuck to the topic of the film's opening section—the beginning of the Yom Kippur War and his subjects' recollections of the first, terrible days of combat when they were overwhelmed by superior Arab forces—*Tsahal* might have had more of *Shoah*'s strengths. But this was not what Lanzmann wished to emphasize. For if *Tsahal* was conceived by him as a sequel to *Shoah,* it was also meant to be *Shoah*'s antithesis, in much the same sense that the state of Israel—risen, as the cliché has it, from the ashes of the Holocaust—is commonly thought of as both the Holocaust's consequence and as its triumphant refutation.

"SUDDENLY I found myself alive. I didn't expect to survive. I had to organize myself to make the decision to live again. . . . We were always taught that we were so strong and now we were impotent," Lanzmann is told in the initial scenes by Yuval Neria, a Yom Kippur War hero who recounts the decimation of his tank brigade by Egyptian infantry; and for a moment this movie really does appear to be *Shoah II.* But soon it counterattacks by picking up the theme of Israel's military successes, and the association of the trauma of the death camps with that of rout on the battlefield is not pursued.

Still, it is the Holocaust, *Tsahal* conveys to us, that has shaped the Israeli army's aggressive battle tactics and philosophy. It is because of the lesson of the Holocaust, Lanzmann is told by southern corps commander Matan Vilnai, now Israel's deputy chief of staff, "that I believe that when people say they are going to kill you, they will do it." And it is the Holocaust, the film implies, which makes ex-chief of staff Ehud Barak believe that in war "the need is always to be the one to initiate activities and make the enemy and not yourself lose control," and former general Ariel Sharon observe that "when you are [threatened] you have to attack immediately . . . you have to attack and not to think . . . because if you wait one more second you may be dead."

This is half of the main point of a film that tends to lose itself in digressions. The other half of the point is that, despite this militant reaction against exilic Jewish passivity in the face of violence, Israel's army remains imbued with the quintessential Jewish virtues of thoughtfulness and concern for life. "It is not a contradiction to retain your human sensitivity while always [being the first] to assault," says Matan Vilnai, and over and over *Tsahal* makes the point that this is a synthesis the Israeli army has achieved.

The movie does this in various ways. For example, as the tank commander who is made to stand for the future of Israel's armored corps, Lanzmann chooses a studious-looking young man with glasses. He films Ariel Sharon walking bucolically on his ranch while relating that he fought to rescue Israeli soldiers trapped along the Suez Canal in 1973 not because it was militarily important but because "it was a moral issue." He listens to Yisrael Tal, former armored corps commander and one of the designers of Israel's self-produced tank, the Merkava, explain that this tank has been maximally

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engineered to protect the lives of those inside it. And he rides during the *intifada* with a commander in the Gaza Strip who muses as a Palestinian rock bounces off his jeep:

> The problem is . . . how does an army stay pure? The *intifada* could be stopped in a week if we used tanks like the French in Algeria. But we are a Jewish army and we know we have no right to do it.

It is repeated scenes like these that led reviewers in Israel to complain that Lanzmann had produced an uncritical paean to the IDF, one that fails to come to grips with its darker sides. There is, they observed, no attempt here to deal with Israeli army brutality toward Palestinians, or the Israeli bombing of civilian neighborhoods and refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982; no indication that the overconfidence of the Israeli general staff was responsible for the opening debacle of the Yom Kippur War; no questioning of Israeli military doctrine, which—as in the tank charge that Yuval Neria helped lead—has at times proved disastrous; little consideration of the Israeli infantry, as opposed to the more elite armored corps and air force, and of ordinary soldiers as opposed to high officers; no attention paid even to one of the most exceptional aspects of Israeli army life, the conscription of women.

These criticisms are justified. Less justified, however, is the assumption of those making them that, had Lanzmann taken his camera into the casbahs of Nablus and Hebron and filmed Israeli soldiers clubbing and shooting Palestinians, the "myth" of a humane Jewish army would have been shattered. Lanzmann should indeed have gone to such places, and should have abandoned his overscrupulous insistence—a virtue in *Shoah* but a self-imposed handicap in *Tsahal*—on the interview as his sole medium. Yet had he done so conscientiously, he might have brought us, besides the standard horror scenes of the Israeli occupation as shown on NBC and CNN, a reality that the world rarely sees.

This reality might have included pictures of Palestinian demonstrators, often women and teenagers, jeering, taunting, cursing, and spitting at Israeli soldiers while the latter bite their lips and do nothing; the same soldiers being instructed by their officers to act with all the restraint they can muster; the same demonstrators being egged on by the very media that then record their victimization when the soldiers finally lose self-control. There *has* been Israeli army brutality toward the Palestinians; there has also been Palestinian provocation of the Israeli army. Lanzmann would have made a better movie had he shown both sides of this picture rather than neither.

On the whole, it seems fair to say, the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza has behaved somewhat better than most other armies would have behaved in similar circumstances, and one of the reasons for this may very well be that it is largely made up of Jews. It is not insignificant that the army units said to be most feared and disliked by the Palestinians are those belonging to the border patrol, predominantly made up of Druse. Nor is this particularly surprising, since the great majority of soldiers in uniform in Israel are conscripts and reservists representing a cross-section of Jewish society, which in its daily life has a relatively high aversion to solving problems by force.

The IDF has its ruffians and violence freaks, but in contrast to many volunteer and professional armies, or those composed largely of lower-class draftees, such types are no more concentrated within it than elsewhere, and they rarely set the tone in the units they serve in. It is worth remembering that the number of innocent Vietnamese killed by American troops in one day at My Lai was roughly half the number of Palestinians killed by the IDF in daily clashes and confrontations over the six years of the *intifada*.

In any case, what is most unusual about the IDF is not that it is a Jewish army—once one gets over the shock or thrill of realizing that Jews can fight, this is a rather banal fact—but that it is a citizens' army, and has remained so for the nearly half-century since its founding. This is something without historical precedent.

True, from the French Revolution on, citizens' armies have been raised in times of war. Armies based on a universal draft and a professional officer class have also existed in peacetime, and Switzerland has a reservists' army that on paper is organized like Israel's. But Israel remains the one country in the world where for decades a combat-ready and experienced military has been composed of men—privates, NCO's, and officers of all ranks—who, when their three years of conscription are over, spend 90 percent of their time as civilians.

This is what several hours of a five-hour movie on the IDF should have been about. *Tsahal*'s overlooking of the topic is all the more puzzling because (unlike such things as combat scenes, which Lanzmann reportedly could not get clearance to film) it is so accessible. One can hardly go anywhere in Israel without encountering the numerous ways in which army and civilian life intersect, frequently in the same person and often in the same day of the same person; a cinematic examination of this phenomenon, and of the way Israelis cope with it, would have produced a far more interesting movie.

I dearly wish, for example, that Lanzmann had been around to film two little scenes I witnessed several years ago, which demonstrated exquisitely how the knowledge that the man who is your commander today will be just another fellow citizen tomorrow makes relationships between officers and enlisted men in the IDF unlike those in any other military on earth. I was serving at the time in a unit responsible for liaison with the Egyptian army in Sinai, and I had just crossed back from the Egyptian side of the border, where I had drunk tea with an Egyptian major. The tea was brought by a young conscript, who entered the major's office with a tray, bowed deeply in the doorway, set the tray on the major's desk, bowed again, walked backward to

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the door so as not to turn his back on an officer, bowed one more time, and departed.

I then went to have lunch in the Israeli army mess hall where ahead of me in the chow line were an Israeli colonel and his driver, a conscript the same age as his Egyptian counterpart. The conscript went first, got his tray filled, walked to an empty table with it, set it down, stared at it for a second, turned around, and shouted at the colonel, who was still being served: "Hey, Hayyim, bring some salt!"

Needless to say, in most circumstances this young driver would have unquestioningly obeyed his colonel's orders. But it is precisely the way in which these parallel modes of behavior coexist, and at times overlap, that is one of the most unusual things about the IDF.

Another is the army's reinforcement of Israeli social egalitarianism; all its officers are chosen and promoted from the ranks solely on the basis of merit, there being no pre-induction officers' training schools in Israel. Still another is the IDF's maturing effect on young people, who are suddenly thrust into positions of responsibility involving life and death at an age when their peers in Europe and the United States are strolling on college campuses. And still another is the collective bonding fostered by an army experience that everyone undergoes, the one point of reference nearly all Israelis share in common.

TOGETHER with the kibbutz, Israel's army is certainly the most distinctive institution the country has produced. And yet, just as the kibbutzim are now undergoing changes that threaten to eliminate their most characteristic features, doubts have also begun to be raised about the long-term prospects of the IDF in its present form.

These doubts reflect developments both in high army circles and in Israeli society at large. At the planning level, their most prominent expression to date has been the army's still-classified Shafir Report (1993), which recommended that the IDF consider transforming itself into a "more selective" body, or, in the words of then chief-of-staff Barak, "a smaller and smarter" fighting force.

The report itself was a response to a number of projected trends, among them the rapid growth of the country's population relative to the manpower needs of the military; the army's adaptation to a high-technology battlefield, in which smaller numbers of better-trained and more specialized soldiers can be entrusted with operating increasingly more deadly and expensive weapons; the social strains likely to be created by the fact that such units will bear the brunt of training and preparedness while large numbers of other men become subsidiary (already there are complaints about the increasing inequality of Israeli reserve service, in which fewer and fewer soldiers are doing more and more days of duty); and the assumption that, as Israel signs peace treaties with its Arab neighbors, the IDF's role will be reduced to a deterrent one.

The Shafir Report fell short of calling for the creation of a purely professional army, and in the light of the *intifada* and continuing Palestinian terror, which have tied down large numbers of ordinary foot soldiers in policing actions, its conclusions may seem premature. But it still could prove to be the writing on the wall.

This is especially so because deep changes taking place in Israeli society cast doubt on the degree to which Israelis will go on indefinitely being prepared to be mobilized for the national-security effort. Even now, among draft-age boys and, especially, girls, there is a palpable drop in the expressed desire to serve in the army, as well as a statistical decline in the percentage of those who do serve. A decrease in motivation to serve in combat units has also been reported by army researchers, and also a shift in the composition of these units, which now draw more heavily on religious youth and less on the secular public and, particularly, the kibbutzim, which once provided a disproportionate number of recruits to the army's elite forces.

This last trend is connected to the rift over the peace process, which pits a heavily secular Israeli Left against an Israeli Right with a large religious component. And this in turn underlines the fact that a citizens' army in a society of consensus, such as Israel has been until recently where most security issues are concerned, is a different story from a citizens' army in a society suffering deep divisions that may be aggravated by what the army is or is not asked to do. If, for instance, the possibility exists that religious soldiers might refuse to obey orders to evacuate Jewish settlers forcibly from their homes in Palestinian territories, it may be tempting to consider the political advantages of a professional military in which the threat of such ideologically motivated insubordination would not occur.

Tsahal deals with none of these issues, nor with the broader question of whether, in a contemporary democracy, a citizens' army is a desideratum or even a possibility. This is regrettable. It is largely because of its army and the role it has played in national life that Israel has come closer to the ancient ideal of the *polis*, the community of equal and mutually responsible freemen entrusted with defending one another's rights and lives, than any other modern state. Here, rather than as an answer to the Holocaust, which it can be conceived of being only poetically, lies the true remarkableness of the IDF.

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Sorry About That

IN RETROSPECT: THE TRAGEDY AND LESSONS OF VIETNAM. By ROBERT S. MCNAMARA with BRIAN VANDEMARK. *Times Books/Random House. 414 pp. $27.50.*

Reviewed by GABRIEL SCHOENFELD

IN 1964, Robert S. McNamara, the whiz kid who at age forty-four came to run the Pentagon for John F. Kennedy via Berkeley, Harvard, and the Ford Motor Company, was asked by a reporter how he felt about the fact that the conflict in Vietnam was being named after him. His reply: "I don't object to its being called McNamara's war. I think it is a very important war and I am pleased to be identified with it and do whatever I can to win it."

As we learn from *In Retrospect*, McNamara's Vietnam-era memoir, he subsequently had a change of mind. We do not know precisely when this occurred, but the memoir hints that seeds for it had already been planted by November 2, 1965, the day an antiwar protester, Norman R. Morrison, appeared just outside the window of McNamara's Pentagon office, poured an inflammable liquid over himself, and lit up—with his one-year-old daughter in his arms. "I believed I understood and shared some of his thoughts," writes McNamara of Morrison.

By late 1967 the strain of the war had clearly exerted a toll on McNamara. Lyndon Johnson even worried aloud to several of his aides that McNamara too might take his own life, just as Truman's Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, had done nineteen years earlier. Although McNamara is anxious to put this particular worry to rest, declaring, "I was not under medical care, not taking drugs except for an occasional sleeping pill, and never contemplated suicide," he left office in 1968 clearly shaken deeply by the direction the war had taken.

For the next two-and-a-half decades, McNamara refrained from publicly discussing Vietnam. In *In Retrospect*, he writes that he remained silent for "fear that I might appear self-serving, defensive, or vindictive, which I wished to avoid at all costs," and perhaps "because it is hard to face one's mistakes." In a recent interview with the *New York Times*, he attributed his long silence to overpowering grief and a sense of failure. Speaking about his book on television, he openly wept as he talked about Vietnam. "We were wrong, terribly wrong," he now declares.

MCNAMARA's contrition has, from some quarters, won him praise. President Clinton, for one, told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that writing the book "was a courageous thing for him to do." Asked if he thought McNamara's admission of error vindicated his own conduct during the war, Clinton responded, "Yes, yes, I do. I know that sounds self-serving, but I do."

But if applause for the book has been both self-interested and resoundingly faint, a veritable Rolling Thunder of opprobrium has also descended on McNamara for having confessed too little and too late. "Where was he when we needed him?" asked the *Boston Globe*. "Belatedly," said *USA Today*, McNamara has "shown us how to avoid repeating his mistakes." In the *Los Angeles Times* he was lampooned in a cartoon picturing him next to the black marble wall of the Vietnam War Memorial, with its 58,196 names, uttering, "Sorry about that." The *New Republic* asked, "Has any single American of this century done more harm than Robert McNamara?" and answered, "No one comes readily to mind." And the *New York Times*, in what ranks as perhaps the most ferocious editorial it has printed in the past three decades, scornfully declared: "Comes now Robert McNamara with the announcement that he has in the fullness of time grasped realities that seemed readily apparent to millions of Americans throughout the Vietnam war."

These attacks are matched in frequency and intensity only by those launched by McNamara at himself within his book. Among the charges he levels: "We lacked experience dealing with crises," "we knew very little about the region," "we failed to analyze our assumptions critically," "the foundations of our decision-making were gravely flawed," and "it is very hard to recapture the innocence and confidence with which we approached Vietnam. . . . "

The sum total of these *mea culpas* is an argument—fortified with an arsenal of quotations drawn from U.S. government memoranda, intelligence estimates, briefing notes, trip reports, and diplomatic cable traffic—that American policy-makers made a flagrant blunder by applying the doctrine of containment to Vietnam:

> We both overestimated the effect of South Vietnam's loss on the security of the West and failed to adhere to the fundamental principle that, in the final analysis, if the South Vietnamese were to be saved, they had to win the war themselves.

Some aspects of this argument are convincing. The South Vietnamese government never demonstrated the stability or the breadth of popular support that would have enabled it to defend itself on its own. The assassination of Vietnam's president, Ngo Dinh Diem, in 1963, an action in which the Kennedy administration was deeply implicated—and which McNamara recounts in riveting detail—accomplished nothing except to exacerbate greatly the po-

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litical weakness of South Vietnam.

The problem-solvers running the Pentagon blithely assumed that instability in the South was just another problem to be solved, and a great deal of misplaced faith was lodged in U.S. army-run training programs and implausible campaigns dreamed up by bureaucrats sitting in dreary cubbyholes in Washington, D.C. and designed to win the hearts and minds of peasants in a faraway land.

McNamara is surely right to say that the Kennedy administration committed an egregious lapse by not thinking long and hard about Saigon's weaknesses before committing the United States' blood, honor, and prestige to South Vietnam's defense. "It seems beyond understanding, incredible, that we did not force ourselves to confront such issues head-on," he writes.

McNamara also obliquely concedes that his technocratic, problem-solving *modus operandi* was ill-suited to the vagaries of jungle warfare in Vietnam. While at Harvard he had developed "an approach to organizing human activities" comprised of three precise steps: "Define a clear objective, . . . develop a plan to achieve that objective, and systematically monitor progress against the plan." But what may have worked at Harvard and later at Ford ran famously aground in the infamous body counts of Vietnam, which McNamara describes in characteristically technocratic terms:

> The body count was a measurement of the adversary's manpower losses; we undertook it because one of Westy's [General Westmoreland's] objectives was to reach a so-called crossover point, at which Vietcong and North Vietnamese casualties would be greater than they could sustain.

This macabre accounting protocol fell victim to the most basic flaw of systems analysis: garbage in, garbage out. "Ah *les statistiques*," a South Vietnamese officer once said of McNamara, "your Secretary of Defense loves statistics. We Vietnamese can give him all he wants. If you want them to go up, they will go up. If you want them to go down, they will go down." As McNamara himself admits, the data reported back from the battlefront as often as not were erroneous, and Washington learned only what it wanted to hear.

Systems analysis also proved of little use to McNamara in grappling with the political dimensions of the war. As Henry Kissinger once observed, in guerrilla warfare of the kind we were fighting, the guerrilla wins if he does not lose; the regular army loses unless it wins. But neither McNamara nor the two Presidents he served ever developed a strategy that aimed for anything but stalemate. Instead of either a quest for victory or an honorable way out, there was only the blind optimism of arrogance that played directly into North Vietnamese hands, as when McNamara declared on one occasion:

> The greatest contribution Vietnam is making—right or wrong is beside the point—is that it is developing an ability in the United States to fight a limited war, to go to war without the necessity of arousing the public ire.

In ancient Greece generals who lost battles were commonly banished from the *polis* for twenty years. In Japan they were expected to fall on their swords. In the Soviet Union they were forced to confess to wrecking or sabotage, then shot. McNamara too has confessed—voluntarily—but he has suffered none of these penalties. Yet for the American soldiers whose lives he wasted, and the lasting damage he did to this country, he certainly did not deserve to be rewarded as he subsequently was with the cushioned life in a limousine he lived when appointed president of the World Bank or accorded great respect for his pronouncements on how to avoid nuclear war (pronouncements which, in his unrequited and unrequitable quest for redemption, he has attached as an appendix to this book).

BE THAT as it may, even as McNamara details the many ways in which he mismanaged the Vietnam war, his bitterest regrets about Vietnam do not spring from this

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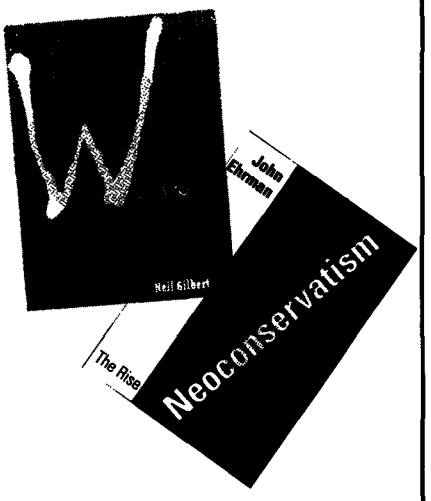

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source. Rather, his principal indictment is that it was not worth the cost. "I question," he writes,

> whether either Soviet or Chinese behavior and influence in the 1970's and 1980's would have been materially different had the United States not entered the war in Indochina or had we withdrawn from Vietnam in the early or mid 1960's.

The "what ifs" of history are by their nature unanswerable. Whether McNamara is right or wrong about this neither he nor we will ever know. But in scrupulously reconstructing the evolution of American decision-making to show when and where it went astray, McNamara inadvertently goes a considerable distance toward undermining his own case that American engagement in Vietnam was wholly avoidable, a foolish mistake, or both.

In Retrospect places the Vietnam war in the context of the noble set of beliefs to which his generation of Americans subscribed in the wake of Munich, World War II, the Marshall Plan, and the Korean war: aggression by a totalitarian power, it was widely understood, had to be stopped. And when the Kennedy administration came into office, McNamara writes,

> Communism still seemed on the march. Mao Tse Tung and his followers had controlled China since 1949 and had fought with North Korea against the West; Nikita Khrushchev had predicted Communist victory through "wars of national liberation" in the third world and had told the West, "We will bury you." His threat gained credibility when the USSR launched Sputnik in 1957, demonstrating its lead in space technology. The next year Khrushchev started turning up the heat on West Berlin. And now Castro had transformed Cuba into a Communist beachhead in our hemisphere. We felt beset and at risk. This fear underlay our involvement in Vietnam.

Three years later, when America had already suffered more than 1,000 casualties in Vietnam, the dangers facing the United States appeared even graver. Here is McNamara's reconstruction of the view from Washington after the erratic Nikita Khrushchev, by placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, brought the world to the very threshold of nuclear war:

> We saw a world where the Hanoi-supported Pathet Lao continued to push forward into Laos, where Sukarno appeared to be moving Indonesia ever closer to the Communist orbit, where Malaysia faced immense pressure from Chinese-supported insurgents, where China had just detonated its first atomic device and continued to trumpet violent revolution, where Khrushchev and his successors in the Kremlin continued to make bellicose statements against the West. In light of all those threats, we viewed unconditional withdrawal as clearly unacceptable.

THERE are those who adhere to a revisionist cold-war historiography according to which the dangers enumerated by McNamara were illusory, and the cold war nothing but an American-manufactured sham. Thus, the *New York Times* editorializes today that back in the 1960's, "McNamara appeared to be helping an obsessed President prosecute a war of no real consequence to the security of the United States" and that "[m]illions of loyal citizens concluded that the war was a militarily unnecessary and politically futile effort to prop up a corrupt government that could neither reform nor defend itself." In fact, however, opinion poll after opinion poll shows that the American people in those years understood and supported what their government was doing in Vietnam.

And back then the *New York Times* also had a rather different cast. One of its editorials from 1965 declared that America "went into Vietnam to contain the advance of Communism in that part of Southeast Asia. . . . The motives are exemplary and every American can be proud of them. . . ." Another *Times* editorial that year stated that "[v]irtually all Americans understand that we must stay in South Vietnam for the near future" and only "a few pacifists here and the North Vietnamese and Chinese Communists are asking for a precipitate withdrawal."

We need not wait for the unsealing of archives in the Kremlin, or for that matter in Beijing, to understand that the dangers of the cold war were not an illusion. Nor were Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and Robert McNamara fools, knaves, or "obsessed" for believing that American determination was being tested in Vietnam, and that failure to demonstrate strength and will might well have led to catastrophic consequences in Asia, in the Middle East, in Europe, or in other disputed corners of the earth.

MCNAMARA himself quotes then-*New York Times* reporter David Halberstam to devastating effect. Halberstam, who today derides America's role in Vietnam, explaining it as the result of fierce political pressure brought to bear on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations from the Right, was telling his readers in 1965 that if America pulled out of Southeast Asia a moral tragedy and strategic debacle would ensue:

> [T]hose Vietnamese who committed themselves fully to the United States will suffer the most under a Communist government, while we lucky few with blue passports retire unharmed; it means a drab, lifeless, and controlled society for a people who deserve better. Withdrawal also means that the United States' prestige will be lowered throughout the world, and it means that the pressure of Communism on the rest of Southeast Asia will intensify. Lastly, withdrawal means that throughout the world the enemies of the West will be encouraged to try insurgencies like the one in Vietnam.

Considering what happened to the South Vietnamese after America did pull out—hundreds of thousands bidding farewell forever to their ancestors' sacred graves to flee "reeducation camps" and other appurtenances of Communist rule, and so many perishing at sea at the hands of pirates or with the foundering of their rickety ships, not to mention the even more unspeakable fate suffered by millions in the mass graveyard that the entire nation of

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neighboring Cambodia became—surely Halberstam's is the most clear-sighted forecast ever to be quietly disavowed.

As for those participants in the antiwar movement who called for America's defeat, who likened their country's conduct to Nazi Germany's, and who had nothing but praise for Ho Chi Minh and Communist Hanoi, they, like President Clinton, have taken McNamara's book as a vindication of their cause. But any honest appraisal of this memoir—as opposed to much of what has been written and said in the caustic blaze of hype that accompanied its publication—will lead to the conclusion that these very protesters, along with those whom the *New York Times* now salutes as "heroes" for having "returned the nation to sanity by chanting, 'Hell, no, we won't go,'" have the indelible stain of blood on their hands as well. For it was they who gave energetic encouragement to Communist North Vietnam to hold fast, to endure, to continue pouring men and materiel into the conquest of the South.

Even with the passage of 25 years it is too soon to forget that grandmotherly Grace Paley, winner of literary prizes and member of PEN, visited Hanoi in 1969 and explained how magnificent was the treatment accorded American prisoners of war.* In the eyes of the Vietnamese, "The pilot in the sky was a killer to be hunted," she wrote, "but the pilot on the ground was a helpless man in their hands, though certainly a war criminal, to be cared for if sick, and eventually to be rehabilitated out of his American insanity if possible." Paley was but one of many who provided aid and comfort to those who tortured American pilots and committed other crimes against both Americans and Vietnamese but who has never shed a tear of regret or uttered a syllable of repentance for the infamous consequences of her words.

EVEN as McNamara concedes mistake after mistake, he never—unlike so many in the antiwar movement—suggests it was morally wrong to attempt to defend South Vietnam from Communist aggression. To the contrary, he says in entirely unequivocal terms:

> The United States of America fought in Vietnam for eight years for what I believed to be good and honest reasons. By such action, administrations of both parties sought to protect our security, prevent the spread of totalitarian Communism, and promote individual freedom and political democracy.

The fundamental decisions taken by McNamara and the administrations he served, if not the means by which they were carried out, appeared entirely reasonable at the time. Though he would undoubtedly deny it, in his careful reconstruction of the historical record, McNamara makes them appear reasonable today. It is perhaps this unexpected effect that explains the terrible fury that has greeted *In Retrospect.*

In Harmony

EMBLEMS OF MIND: THE INNER LIFE OF MUSIC AND MATHEMATICS. BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN. *Times Books. 263 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by TERRY TEACHOUT

MUSIC is the most radically elusive of the arts. It is conceived in the mind, "made" in the physical world, and experienced through the senses, but its essence is not to be found in any of these domains. Those who view music as part of the world of ideas—a notion intrinsic to all music criticism worthy of the name—inevitably fail to do justice to its fundamentally nonintellectual nature. Yet discussions of music couched solely in terms of formal language have a circular quality that fails no less inevitably to speak to our in-

* See "A Dissent on Grace Paley" by Carol Iannone, COMMENTARY, August 1985.

TERRY TEACHOUT *is the editor of* A SECOND MENCKEN CHRESTOMATHY. *His article, "The Problem of Shostakovich," appeared in our February issue.*

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stinctive belief that music has meaning.

Thus, although we may be intrigued when Igor Stravinsky assures us that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all," we should be more inclined to believe Schopenhauer when he tells us that music

> does not express a particular and definite joy, sorrow, anguish, horror, delight, or mood of peace, but joy, sorrow, anguish, horror, delight, peace of mind *themselves*, in the abstract, in their essential nature, without accessories. . . .

These issues are the subject matter of what is sometimes called the philosophy of music. The term is not in general use (most English-speaking musicologists prefer "musical aesthetics"), but it is both logical and to the point. Philosophy, according to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, is "the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge of reality," and that is what philosophers of music do: they seek the truth about music. Such quests are by definition unending, and so there is no shortage of important books dealing with the meaning of music, some by scholars (Victor Zuckerkandl's *Sound and Symbol*, Leonard B. Meyer's *Emotion and Meaning in Music*) and some by major composers (Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*, Paul Hindemith's *A Composer's World*).

Now Edward Rothstein, chief music critic of the *New York Times*, has written a book of comparable interest that seeks to illuminate music by examining its relationship to mathematics. This approach is, of course, as old as Pythagoras, but Rothstein comes at it from a distinctive angle: *Emblems of Mind*, as its subtitle indicates, is not about the specifically mathematical aspects of music but about the "inner lives" of the two disciplines, and in particular about the way in which they both rely on "metaphor, abstraction, and comparison." Rothstein, who studied pure mathematics before going into music, is unusually qualified for this task, and *Emblems of Mind* is full of the kinds of fresh, unforced comparisons that spring naturally to the double consciousness of a man conversant with two fields.

ROTHSTEIN begins by exploring the styles of thought that are characteristic and common to both mathematics and music, showing how each discipline "keeps stepping back from the arguments it has made, discovering ever more elaborate abstractions that reveal ever deeper similarities." From there he goes on to explore the more complex questions of what music does, and why it matters. In examining these questions, Rothstein appears at first glance to side more with Stravinsky than Schopenhauer:

> There are no discoveries in music that illuminate our physical universe. Instead, through music, we learn more about musical objects—phrases, chords, gestures. . . . Once music is detached from function, once it becomes a repertory art, it explicitly strives to define itself, out of itself, to become "mathematical"—that is to say, to begin from premises and proceed to conclusions by interpreting its own universe, finding its own laws. . . .

But the seeming chilliness of this vision is warmed by a constant awareness of the fact that the goal of music—as well as of mathematics—is beauty. Innumerates are typically nonplussed when they hear mathematicians speak of the "beauty" or "elegance" of a particular argument (though not Edna St. Vincent Millay, who assured her readers that "Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare"). In fact, the concept is easy to grasp. "The beauty" of mathematics, Rothstein explains,

> is in the simplicity of the reasoning when faced with the complexity of the expected calculations. . . . Beauty is experienced as a form of knowledge because it is through the archetypical rational act—that of analogy and metaphor—that we come to know the beautiful.

As for beauty in music, though more familiar to the average reader/listener, it is no less subtle to capture. What do we mean when we say the Mozart G-Minor Symphony is "beautiful"? Do we have in mind a property that the music of Mozart has in common with *Rigoletto*? Is that same property also to be found in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*—or Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses and Aron*, a work whose melodic and harmonic materials are not organized according to the traditional "laws" of tonality (but whose rhythmic materials, by contrast, are utterly conventional)?

According to Rothstein, beauty in music is directly analogous to beauty in mathematics:

> We can have such an immediate reaction to the aesthetic creation lying before us, such awe at its internal workings and the powers they exercise upon us, that the work seems something not made but simply presented; it requires no analysis of purpose nor any reflection about meaning; it appears to our senses as something completely natural.

Furthermore, music can suggest a "truth" comparable to the truth of a mathematical equation: "Musical truth involves something about the ways a composition is consistent, complete, and open to mappings in our various worlds of sense and thought." By contrast, "we think of music as false when it violates its own premises."

Rothstein does not shy away from the final implication of this insight. For him, music and mathematics "remain mysteries, seeming too close to Truth to be merely human, too close to invention to be divine." Having invoked the ultimate source of truth and beauty, he properly concludes *Emblems of Mind* with twin inscriptions: Q.E.D., or *Quod erat demonstrandum* ("That which was to be proved"), the traditional conclusion of a mathematical proof; and S.D.G., or *Soli Deo gloria* ("To God alone the glory"), with which Bach frequently inscribed his compositions.

REGULAR readers of Edward Rothstein's criticism will not be surprised by the thoughtfulness of his

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approach to the problem of beauty in music, or by the bracing austerity of his taste. Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart are the composers most often cited in *Emblems of Mind* (though there is also an interesting discussion of that most enigmatic of Romantic piano pieces, Chopin's A-Minor Prelude). Yet Rothstein assures us that the power of music to "find its own laws"

> allows us to comprehend many compositions written during the last 30 years by composers like Pierre Boulez, Milton Babbitt, and Elliott Carter, whose relationships and variations are built not upon tonal laws and relations but upon laws that may have been invented for a particular composition.

One may doubt that Rothstein's explanation of how music works can, in fact, be convincingly extended to the experience of listening to a work like the Elliott Carter Double Concerto: after all, an internally consistent, seemingly elegant mathematical proof can easily be erected on the foundation of a false premise. But even a reader who differs with Rothstein on matters of taste will find *Emblems of Mind* a highly persuasive essay in the philosophy of music. Though he may not succeed in explaining why most listeners prefer Poulenc and Prokofiev (neither of whom appears in the index) to Carter and Schoenberg, Rothstein has nonetheless succeeded in framing a "general theory" of musical meaning that is not only stimulating but also quite strikingly poetic. Few books have taught me more about the essential nature of music, and fewer still have done so with comparable grace and clarity.

Emblems of Mind is in no way a chatty or anecdotal book. "My intention," Rothstein says in his introduction, "has been to write for the literate layman, the curious listener and student who might never have studied math beyond high school or music beyond elementary school." Laymen will certainly be able to follow Rothstein's line of argument—the mathematics looks more frightening than it actually is—but this book demands, and rewards, the kind of sustained concentration that our bite-sized musical culture has sought to render superfluous. Anyone for whom classical music remains a central, indispensable part of high culture will find *Emblems of Mind* a powerful and provocative work.

The Circumcised Heart

A RADICAL JEW: PAUL AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY. BY DANIEL BOYARIN. *University of California Press. 366 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by JAY M. HARRIS

A *Radical Jew* is billed as an encounter, on the part of "a practicing Jew, Talmudist, [and] cultural critic," with "some of the most remarkable texts of Western literature, the *Letters* of Paul." Daniel Boyarin, a professor at Berkeley, here attempts not only to explain the conversion of the leading apostle of the early Christian community but to show how the struggles of this erstwhile Jew of the 1st century have much to teach us about our own contemporary quandaries.

The key to Paul's thought, Boyarin writes, is to be found in an early baptismal formula cited in his *Letter to the Galatians* (3:28). It reads: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

From this citation, Boyarin concludes that Paul was deeply troubled by the fact that in the Jewish world as he knew it, all such distinctions, particularly the first, were of paramount significance. Paul's conversion to Christianity, in this reading, was an expression of distress at the "exclusivist" and "ethnocentric" tendencies of 1st-century Judaism. How can it be, Paul asked himself, that a God who created the entire world could make ethnic distinctions, and show greater concern for one people than for others?

JAY M. HARRIS, *a new contributor, teaches Jewish history at Harvard.*

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According to Boyarin, this dissatisfaction with Jewish ethnocentrism led Paul to adopt certain strategies to allegorize Israel and the laws that made Israel distinctive. Thus, for the new Paul, God's love would not be directed to Israel "in the flesh" but to "Israel of the spirit"; the demands made of humanity would include circumcision not of the penis but of the heart; and so on. In this way, Paul could retain his allegiance to the word of God as it was revealed in Scripture and still develop a philosophy in keeping with Hellenistic thought, with its emphasis on universals.

Boyarin next proceeds to show how (some of) the rest of the corpus of letters written by Paul can be illuminated by his insight. In particular, he credits Paul, again on the basis of the formula cited above, with a concern for equality between the sexes. Although there are many famous texts in Paul that would appear to challenge this reading, Boyarin says they only represent a concession to the realities of the time.

Throughout, Boyarin makes clear that his is not an exercise in antiquarianism, but rather one that has important repercussions today, and specifically for Jews. In his closing chapter he takes Paul's critique to heart and attempts to develop an ethics of Jewish identity that will preserve the Jews' "genealogical" and cultural distinctiveness but will not descend into racist ethnocentrism (read: Zionism). An identity tied to "hegemonic" political power must result, he asserts, in a "moral monstrosity"; if Jews mean "to preserve the positive ethical, political value of Jewish genealogy," they must divest themselves of the quest for power and self-determination, and instead strive to "preserve their subaltern status"—that is, be dominated by others.

THIS book abounds with interesting insights into the letters of Paul, as well as with forthright challenges to interpretations of Paul and Judaism that remain mired in anti-Jewish attitudes. But it also embodies much that is wrong with contemporary academic scholarship, not to mention contemporary intellectual life in general.

Boyarin is a devotee of what has come to be known as postmodern theory. This allows him to present, in his own words, a "constructed" Paul: a "highly politicized intervention in biblical interpretation and, I hope, more than that as well." And this "cultural reading" is designed "not to judge Paul but to see in what way his cultural theory *can be useful to us*" (emphasis added).

One can appreciate Boyarin's honesty here; unfortunately, his approach undermines the honesty of everything that comes after. Virtually every judgment in this book is guided by the criterion of what is "useful" to "us." Take the following instructive passage:

> There is . . . one element in Paul's thought on sexuality that divides him sharply from the later rabbinic tradition and connects him rather with other trends in contemporary Judaism, and that is the question of celibacy, which, I argue, is crucial to solving the problem that *I am about* in this chapter. [Emphasis added]

In short, this is a book less about Paul than about Daniel Boyarin, a rather less interesting subject. To see how this works in practice we should go back to Boyarin's starting point, the baptismal formula cited in Paul's *Letter to the Galatians*; these verses provide the "hermeneutic key" through which he reads his carefully selected portion of the Pauline corpus. Many Paul scholars, however, would regard this text as marginal or peripheral. In good postmodern fashion, Boyarin counters by saying that a "reading" of Paul must begin somewhere, and in any event he can see no basis for declaring one text marginal and another central.

But does the fact that a reading of Paul's diffuse corpus must "begin somewhere" mean that it can or should begin anywhere a "cultural critic" wants it to? Anyway, Boyarin is being disingenuous in disclaiming judgments of centrality, for *he* has quite improbably made this verse the central text in the Pauline corpus.

And who is the Paul we see through its lens? It turns out that, just like Daniel Boyarin, he was a Jewish "cultural critic"; just like Daniel Boyarin, he was deeply dissatisfied with Jewish ethnocentrism; and just like Daniel Boyarin, he was moved to create a vision in which all humanity would be united and racism and sexism would be overcome. One almost expects to be told that Paul was a professor at Berkeley.

BUT there are worse offenses here than solipsism. By the time Boyarin is done with all his reinterpreting, what we are left with is the ancient and tired image of Paul the self-conscious universalist, counterposed to Jewish particularism and ethnocentrism. This image has a long, ugly, and destructive history, to which Boyarin is admittedly sensitive—but not so sensitive as to question its validity.

And this raises a harder question: *is* Boyarin, following a host of others, justified in seeing Paul as a self-conscious universalist and the Jews as uniquely exclusivist? In what is perhaps the most egregious lapse in this book, Boyarin chooses to ignore or to elide the final words of the text he himself has selected for his extended homily: namely, "ye are *all one in Christ Jesus.*" True, Boyarin acknowledges the imperialism of this statement, its demand for sameness. But there is much more in it that he does not acknowledge.

First-century depictions of the Jews all agree that they were distinguished from others primarily by circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance; as Boyarin notes, these practices "mark[ed] off the covenant community exclusively." And this was a problem, since "justification or salvation was dependent on being a member of that very community."

Of course, as Boyarin knows full well, the Jewish covenant community was *not* closed to people of different ethnic origins, for the option of conversion was very real. But, while the "doors were opened," one

> was saved by becoming *Jewish.* This is not, then, exclusiveness in the sense that it excludes in principle anyone, but neither

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does it conform to any Greek sense of the universal, of the One. It remains, after all, a valorization of difference.

In other words, to become Jewish was to mark oneself off as "different" from some general norm called humanity.

Yet did Paul's insistence on justification only in Christ Jesus substantially diverge from this? Paul claimed to have discovered the right path to salvation—faith in Jesus—which displaced the wrong path, the law. So the doors were opened, not closed; nevertheless, one was saved by becoming *Christian*. The "old Israel" had been lopped off at its roots, and replaced by the "new Israel."

One might be inclined to argue that in Paul's view the Jews somehow deserved this fate, as punishment for their own exclusivism. But Paul excluded "pagans" as well, unless they totally redirected their minds to faith in Jesus. Believers married to unbelievers might remain in their current state (divorce being unacceptable), but those who were not married, such as widows, were only to marry other believers.

Was this not the mark of someone, much less naive than Daniel Boyarin, who recognized the partisan nature of his message; who knew that there was an "in" group and an "out" group; and who also knew that his message would tear families and communities apart? That Paul's exclusivism was more "ecclesiocentric" than "ethnocentric" primarily means that, as the historian Edward Gibbon noted long ago, it was socially less narrow than some forms of Jewish exclusivism; but that is a difference in degree, not in kind.

True, Paul believed that in the end of days the old Israel would once again find its place. Boyarin sees this as somehow mitigating Paul's exclusiveness, but in fact it hardly differed from standard prophetic notions of the reconciliation of all mankind in messianic times. A much more substantial difference was this: Paul hoped that all would join him now, whereas other contemporary Jews saw the promised unification of humanity as something postponed to the redeemed future. This variation in reading the redemptive timetable turned out to have enormous social and historical implications; but it too was not grounded in a universalist opposition to particularism. In the end, for Paul, as for Zechariah and the other Hebrew prophets, the unification of humanity would take place on exclusivist terms. Those with the right theology would be in; those with the wrong, out.

Where, then, did Paul's alleged sense of the universal come from? Boyarin appeals throughout to Hellenism and the philosophical school that historians call Middle Platonism, and he wrongly treats them as synonyms, ultimately reducing them to a cliché: the search for unity, "univocity," the "One." But even on his own terms the universalism that he claims for Paul was not quite the same as that of the Platonists, precisely because it aspired (according to Boyarin) to be socially concrete: that is, to challenge and eliminate hierarchy, racism, and sexism in the here and now. (Again, Boyarin ignores or weakly explains away the many texts that make clear that Paul aspired to no such thing.)

Unfortunately, such a concrete vision does not readily flow out of Middle Platonic thought. Where one *does* find a view of a redemptive intervention in history that will unify all (deserving) humanity around a shared theological principle is, again, in a body of literature with which Paul was intimately familiar, namely, the Hebrew Bible. Yet to see Paul's thought as deriving from the biblical corpus, and corresponding to important elements in the rabbinic tradition, would make him less "useful," for then Boyarin would have to acknowledge that concern for the ultimate destiny of others occupies an important, and underemphasized, place in sacred Jewish literature.

As I have said, the real purpose of this book is to develop, on the basis of a "reading" of Paul, the case for a radicalized Jewish identity—one that will continue to maintain its "difference" but will divest itself of all vestiges of ethnocentrism and

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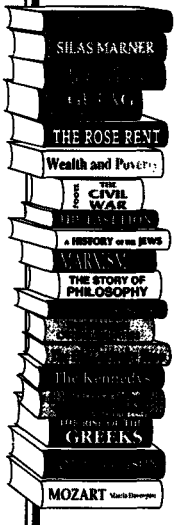

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nationalism. Here, Boyarin's intellectual solipsism passes beyond the silly and the wrong-headed to the dangerous.

In his final chapter, Boyarin zeroes in on the alleged defects of contemporary Jewish particularism, or "difference":

> We must be prepared to recognize that Jewish difference with its concomitant nearly exclusive emphasis on caring for other Jews . . . can become an ugly lack of caring for the fate of others and thus another form of racism. . . .

To overcome this fault, Boyarin urges modern Jews to adapt the "rabbinic strategy of *self-deterritorialization*" (emphasis added).

Here we come to the heart of the matter. In Boyarin's judgment, after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, the ancient rabbis actually sought to

> *enable* the loss of the Land. It was political possession of the Land which most threatened the possibility of continued Jewish cultural practice and difference. Given the choice between an ethnocentricity which would not seek domination over others or a seeking of political domination that would *necessarily* have led either to a dilution of distinctiveness, tribal warfare, or fascism, the rabbis de facto *chose* the former. [Emphasis added]

This is ahistorical nonsense of an extraordinary audacity. That the ancient rabbis developed strategies to deal with the loss of Jewish political sovereignty is beyond question. That these strategies facilitated the survival of (one kind of) Jewish culture seems reasonable enough. But where do the rabbis give voice to the notion that it was political *possession* of the land that "most threatened the possibility of continued Jewish cultural practice and difference"? Boyarin provides no evidence of any kind, for there is none.

To what end this fantasy? Again, the aim is a narrowly contemporary one: to propose the inauthenticity of Zionism, and correlatively the authenticity of the Diaspora; to argue against "European, Western cultural-political formation"—i.e., Jewish nationalism—and "for a traditional Jewish [formation] that has been based on a sharing—at best—of political power with others." This is quite as if Diaspora life were not in part the consequence of horrific violence against the Jews and Jewish sovereignty but instead the welcome result of ancient sages soberly contemplating the wealth of choices open to the Jews, and settling happily on "sharing."

Now, perhaps the single most continuous thread in modern Jewish political history has been the effort to create a viable Diaspora identity. Indeed, Zionism itself emerged as the judgment of a small minority of Jews that the conditions for such an identity did not and could not exist in the West. But one thing that can be said indisputably about that small group of Jews is that they did not wish to dominate others; they simply wished to cease being dominated and/or pressured into assimilation.

The vast majority of European Jewry, however, resisted the Zionist conclusion, insisting instead on the viability of the Diaspora—despite the anti-Semites, despite the Dreyfus Affair, despite ever-mounting evidence that European nationalism would not tolerate the presence of Jews and/or that Jews could not maintain their cultural distinctiveness under modern European conditions. It took, in our own century, extraordinary genocidal violence to impel large numbers of Jews to question this cherished mode of existence.

Yet in Boyarin's fantasy of history, the modern Diaspora has been free of anti-Jewish violence, as free, presumably, as was the ancient world. He can thus construct a modern Jewish identity in which Jews will be at one and the same time Jewish and anything else they wish to be: "In the morning I may go to the synagogue, and in the evening to hear Emmylou Harris." The only thing standing in the way of this lovely idyll is Zionism, the aggressive, racist, hegemonic "discourse" that is so at odds with the benign, nonhegemonic "discourse" of the rabbis.

If the problem, then, is "territorialization," the solution is "self-deterritorialization." For "that which would be racism in the hands of a dominating group is resistance in the hands of a subaltern collective." True to his brand of universalism, Boyarin assures us that ideally he would like *all* humanity to share this subaltern status—whatever that might mean. ("What I wish to struggle for theoretically is a notion of identity in which there are only slaves but no masters . . .") But as a practical matter, he seems to think the obligation falls only on the Jews; they alone are commanded to seek a return to the condition of which Zionism and the state of Israel have robbed them. And, since the world will no doubt continue to house not just the dominated of the earth but the dominating as well, presumably they alone will also be expected to suffer the consequences.

I INDICATED earlier that Boyarin's thought is rooted in, and has thoroughly internalized, certain self-serving, anti-Jewish strains in early Christian discourse concerning the Jews—yet another demonstration of the uncanny affinity between postmodernism and premodernism (but that is another story). In this mindset, Jewish exclusivism is racist and ethnocentric while the exclusivisms of others go unrecognized, legitimized, or celebrated for their "universalism." As for Boyarin's supposedly vanguard notion that Jews must be "subaltern," this again resembles nothing so much as Augustine's prescription for Jewish subordination. Finally, in putting his demand for abstract moral purity above the concrete needs of real Jews, Boyarin edges close to the mentality of those who, in other days, would burn bodies to save souls.

Horribly misguided though such people were, however, at least we can say of them that they were trying to save those souls. Boyarin has improved on the old model, being prepared to dispose of the bodies of his fellow Jews in order to save his own soul. In this, too, he is thoroughly postmodern.

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Out of the Archives

THE SECRET WORLD OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM. BY HARVEY KLEHR, JOHN EARL HAYNES, AND FRIDRIKH IGOREVICH FIRSOV. *Yale. 384 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by MARK FALCOFF

ONE day when I was about twelve years old, while rummaging in my father's bookcase, I came across Whittaker Chambers's *Witness.* Not a book for children; but my political interests were rather precocious, and Chambers's melodramatic way of telling his story gripped my attention.

I did not get down to reading that book from cover to cover until many years later, but even at the age of twelve I had no trouble grasping its principal argument—namely, that a Soviet espionage ring had been placed in the highest circles of Washington before and during World War II, and that one of its most important figures was a man by the name of Alger Hiss.

This was not a particularly exceptionable revelation in the late 1950's, since by that time Chambers's assertions had been buttressed by such works of scholarship as Theodore Draper's *The Roots of American Communism* and *American Communism and Soviet Russia,* as well as of Irving Howe and Lewis Coser's *The American Communist Party: A Critical History 1919-1957.* These books took off from (but were not limited to) the testimony and memoirs of a number of former Communists, including Chambers but also Benjamin Gitlow, Elizabeth Bentley, Sandor Voros, Walter Krivitsky, and Louis Budenz.

Since then, political fashions in the academy have changed, and a whole new historiography has emerged. Over the last twenty years or so, a small mountain of monographs has been piling up to challenge the older view of American Communism. In many ways a by-product of the Vietnam war and its legacy of anti-anti-Communism, these works argue that the American Communist party, far from having been a tool of the Soviet Union, was just one more participant (albeit a radical one) in the ongoing evolution of American democracy, with deep roots in our own populist past.

In this interpretation, there was no such thing as Soviet espionage, merely overheated allegations by renegades like Chambers and Bentley whose accounts were unreliable, exaggerated, or driven by a desire to cash in on the postwar wave of anti-Communism, and who were egged on by opportunistic and unscrupulous politicians (McCarthy, McCarran, Nixon, *et al.*). Even people normally regarded as Communists or fellow-travelers were nothing of the sort, but instead "civil-rights activists," "union organizers," "anti-fascist volunteers," or (lately) "feminists."

Leading exponents of the revisionist view have been Maurice Isserman, Ellen W. Schrecker, Fraser M. Ottanelli, Robert Rosenstone, and, in a more popular vein, Vivian Gornick (author of the improbably-titled *The Romance of American Communism*). All have tended to represent the 1940's and 50's as a period in which Americans (in the words of the British revisionist David Caute) lay "sweat-drenched in fear" of a wholly imaginary threat.

UNFORTUNATELY for the revisionists, the collapse of the Soviet Union has suddenly made available the archives of the Comintern (Communist International), the Soviet Communist party, and other formerly super-secret sources. Under an agreement with the Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Recent History, Yale University Press has undertaken to publish an annotated selection of these materials under the rubric, "Annals of Communism." *The Secret World of American Communism,* the first volume of the series, has been ably edited by Harvey Klehr, the author of *The Heyday of American Communism* (1984), in collaboration with John Earl Haynes of the Library of

MARK FALCOFF *is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

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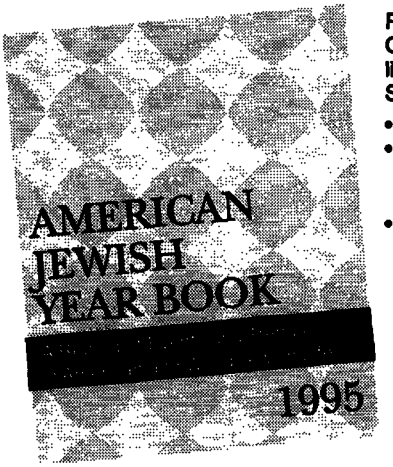

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Congress and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, now curator of the Comintern archives.

This volume contains 92 of more than 1,000 documents which the editors examined in the course of their work. The questions they put to themselves were: (1) Did the American Communist party (CPUSA) conceal key aspects of its organization in a secret apparatus?; (2) did secret members of the party infiltrate U.S. government agencies in the 1930's and 1940's?; and (3) did the Communist party and its members commit espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union? These documents clearly show that all three questions must be answered yes.

HERE, in brief, is the picture which emerges. From its very inception the American Communist party was financially dependent on the Soviet Union. It was established, in fact, through a grant of several million dollars' worth of diamonds and jewelry, converted into hard currency by a covert financial network in which the industrialist Armand Hammer and his father Julius were prominent figures. (The sainted John Reed, he of *Ten Days That Shook The World*, was even apprehended by the Finnish police while engaged in a bit of jewel-smuggling for the party.)

While the CPUSA operated in the full light of day throughout the 20's and 30's, it also possessed a secret apparatus. By the mid-30's this apparatus had managed to penetrate U. S. government agencies and some mainstream liberal organizations. Not only did individual party members find employment in these places, but they used their positions to advance party agendas. In the case of government agencies, this very specifically included "pilfering government documents and transmitting useful information to Communist supervisors, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of the government process."

The secret apparatus ranged far and wide, and was engaged in activities not normally associated even with radical political parties. Thus, it tipped off the Kremlin to visiting Soviet citizens who, once in the United States, had decided not to return, and even to "deviationists" in Moscow itself who had come to the attention of American party functionaries. Many American Communist leaders were graduates of the International Lenin School in Moscow, where the curriculum had nothing to do with organizing trade unions or registering blacks to vote. Earl Browder, the chairman of the CPUSA in the 30's and early 40's, was a talent scout for Soviet intelligence; his sister Margaret was a Soviet agent. (Browder, who was fully aware of this, chose to lie about it under oath before a congressional committee.)

Most important of all, Comintern files establish that the secret apparatus of the CPUSA had integral links to Soviet espionage against the United States during World War II. The party managed to penetrate both the Office of Secret Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information (OWI), where, according to party leader Eugene Dennis, it played a key role in shaping policy.

Three memos from General Pavel Fitin (head of the NKVD foreign-intelligence directorate, 1940-46) also support Elizabeth Bentley's charge in the 1950's that mid-level government officials had supplied her with espionage materials. These were all members of the so-called Perlo Group, named after Victor Perlo, a man whom Victor Navasky, the editor of the *Nation*, described as recently as 1978 as nothing more than a "New Deal economist." The papers do not establish exactly what these people did, but one has to wonder—as the editors do—why the NKVD would be asking for information about seven U. S. government employees; surely they were not selected at random out of the thousands then employed in Washington?

The documents do establish beyond doubt the fact of Soviet penetration of the Manhattan Project to build the first atomic bomb. Specifically, they show that Morris Cohen, a party member and a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, was the initial contact between Soviet intelligence and an American physicist who eventually supplied the Soviets with most of our nuclear secrets. They also provide additional support for Whittaker Chambers's case against Hiss by establishing that the man Chambers knew as J. Peters was indeed a key figure in the Washington underground of the Soviet espionage apparatus.

PERHAPS the most surprising thing about the revelations in this book is how unsurprising they are—at least for anyone who has followed the traditional historiography of American Communism, or given even minimum credence to the many defectors over the years who have gone public with what they knew. But this is only the first in a number of volumes yet to appear in the series, which will include, most significantly, the copious diary maintained by Comintern chief Georgi Dimitroff. Revisionists will hardly have time to absorb these documents and manufacture rationalizations for the conduct of their heroes before another volley of materials comes bursting forth from Moscow.

Perhaps even more significant, with these volumes it will be possible for the first time to go back and resume the historical controversy derailed by the career of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy. As the editors point out,

> because McCarthy and those like him used the issue of American Communist involvement in Soviet espionage to assail liberals and Democrats, some people concluded that anyone who suggested that the CPUSA was involved in covert activities and espionage was a McCarthyite.

McCarthy was engaged in careless, often inaccurate, accusations with no basis in fact; he not only thereby ruined many individual lives and careers, but also performed a backhanded favor for the very forces he claimed to be fighting. But, to cite the editors again, without the "secret world of the CPUSA," such excesses would not have been possible in the first place. Now, surviving members of the party and, even more, their tenured apologists will be forced

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to make their case in the face of documentary evidence of a kind they never expected to confront.

The Good Ayatollahs

THE FAILURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM. By Olivier Roy. Translated by Carol Volk. *Harvard. 238 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by Daniel Pipes

For decades, "the Middle East conflict" has referred to the Arab-Israeli confrontation. But now the central conflict of the region seems at least equally to concern fundamentalist Islam: will it manage to take over, or will the mostly nonfundamentalist autocrats in the Arab and Muslim world remain in power?

The question has enormously important implications, primarily for the Muslims involved but also for Israel and the United States. Should the fundamentalists win, the Middle East will be in for a long dark era. Weapons of mass destruction will proliferate; warfare will become more common; economies will contract. All-out hostility with Israel will again be likely. Americans will be targeted for terrorism and other violence.

The fundamentalists could well take over several governments within a short time. In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has launched a virtual civil war. In Egypt, radical fundamentalists control parts of the cities and countryside. Fundamentalist parties have done impressively well in nearly all the Muslim countries with electoral politics (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Malaysia). By any measure, the fundamentalist challenge to the established order is growing, and much of the Muslim world is currently at risk.

The title of this book therefore comes as something of a surprise. Political Islam a failure? Since Olivier Roy, a leading French analyst of Islam, knows all about what is going on in the Muslim world, "failure" must have a special meaning for him. And indeed, the failure he alludes to follows from an elaborate argument, one that distinguishes between something called Islamism and something called neofundamentalism.

For Roy, the former entails a drive for political power, while the latter signifies only a focus on the family and the mosque. In Roy's view, neofundamentalism represents a "watering down" of Islamism. Instead of taking over the state, neofundamentalists concentrate on creating their own miniature versions of the just society; the challenge they pose to "the political, economic, and social realms" is a challenge not in deeds but "only in words."

This is where the "failure" comes in. For outside of Iran itself, according to Roy, Islamism has faltered and the weaker cause of neofundamentalism has flourished. And this is a salutary thing:

> It marks the streets and customs but has no power relationship in the Middle East. It does not influence either state borders or interests. It has not created a "third force" in the world. It has not even been able to offer the Muslim masses a concrete political expression for their anticolonialism.

In brief, the challenge of fundamentalist Islam has been overrated, and "the Islamic revolution is behind us." This is so even in Iran; "the Teheran of the mullahs," Roy asserts in an astonishing passage, "has a very American look." Should it stagger to power elsewhere, fundamentalism "would produce only superficial changes in customs and law." Nor does it pose any great challenge to the West. It "is not a geostrategic factor: it will neither unify the Muslim world nor change the balance of power in the Middle East."

Roy is a very knowledgeable student of Islam, even a brilliant one, and his well-translated book is replete with fine insights and memorable epigrams. (My favorite: "There are happy Muslims;

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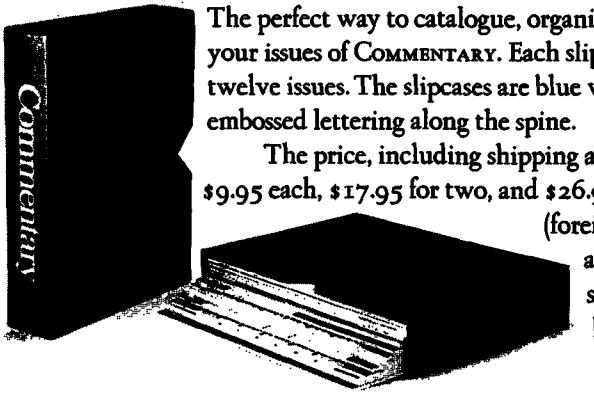

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Commentary

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there are no happy Islamists.") His analysis, moreover, contains kernels of truth. He is right to note, for example, that contrary to the usual assumption, fundamentalist Islam is a form of modernization. In Roy's elegant paraphrase of Lenin on Soviet Communism, it is "the *sharia* [Islamic sacred law] plus electricity."

Roy also makes the valid point that fundamentalist Islam of either the Islamist or the "neo-" variety cannot work: there is no possibility that its program will serve Muslims well, or that they will stick with it over the long haul. As Muslims recognize fundamentalism to be dysfunctional, they will abandon it.

But when will this happen? The realization that fundamentalism does not work could be years or decades hence, and in the meantime Islamic regimes can do a great deal of damage both to their own populace and to the rest of the world. The mullahs in Iran have tasted power and appear to like it; they will make great efforts to retain control of their country, not to mention expanding their influence outward. (As for Teheran having "a very American" look, check the next photograph of that city that appears in your newspaper.)

This takes us to what is stunningly wrong-headed about Roy's central thesis concerning the failure of fundamentalist Islam. He seems to assume that because fundamentalists have not yet swept the Muslim world, they cannot do so in the future. This is comparable to an analyst's looking around in 1933, sixteen years after the Bolshevik Revolution, and deciding that because Communism had as yet come to power in only two countries (Mongolia being the second), and was not living up to its socialist ideals even there, it followed that "the revolution is behind us." Today, sixteen years after the Iranian revolution, Roy has come to a no less profoundly mistaken conclusion.

Indeed, Roy has already been proved wrong. The original French version of *The Failure of Political Islam* appeared in October 1992. In it, Roy predicted that if the FIS should reach power in Algeria and displace the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), it would "not invent a new society . . . the FIS's Algeria will do nothing more than place a *chador* [women's headdress] over the FLN's Algeria."

Well, three years have passed, and the FIS is already yesterday's organization, having been surpassed by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). As its name implies, the GIA is no gentle band of preachers urging moral self-improvement but a deadly gang of murderers who specialize in killing children of police officers, women without veils, unsympathetic journalists, and non-Muslim foreigners. Their preferred methods are particularly horrifying; they specialize in slitting throats and cutting off heads .

As in Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge attacked everyone educated and Western-oriented, so in Algeria today anyone speaking French or wearing a business suit is a potential victim. The scale of carnage in Algeria may well end up making the revolution in Iran seem like child's play.

So much, then, for the taming of fundamentalism. Which raises the question: how can someone who knows so much be so wrong?

For one thing, Roy writes in the French tradition of intellectual virtuosity—taking an implausible point and making a brilliant argument for it. He also indulges in the favorite intellectual pastime of scandalizing the middle class. As fears of fundamentalist Islam are particularly severe in France these days, he must insist on their being illusory.

But whatever French games Roy may be playing, his book is politically significant here in the United States. Enlightened American opinion already tells us not to worry about fundamentalist Islam. Leading American specialists—they include John Entelis, John Esposito, and John Voll—argue that beyond the rough edges and bristling rhetoric is a movement that is democratic in spirit, capitalist in orientation, and prepared to coexist with the West. Roy adds fuel to this fantasy by assuring us that fundamentalist Islam has degenerated into a quietist movement seeking to create nothing more than "authentically Muslim microsocieties."

Unfortunately, Roy and his ilk have the ear of our policy-makers, for at least when it comes to Algeria (less so in the case of Egypt and Iran) the U.S. has conspicuously refrained from condemning the fundamentalists' ideas and goals. Instead, it seeks them out to engage in dialogue. As Algeria stands today on the threshold of becoming the last great tragedy of the 20th century, it is deeply distressing that leading scholars and intellectuals are finding ways, yet again, to lull the West with false hopes.

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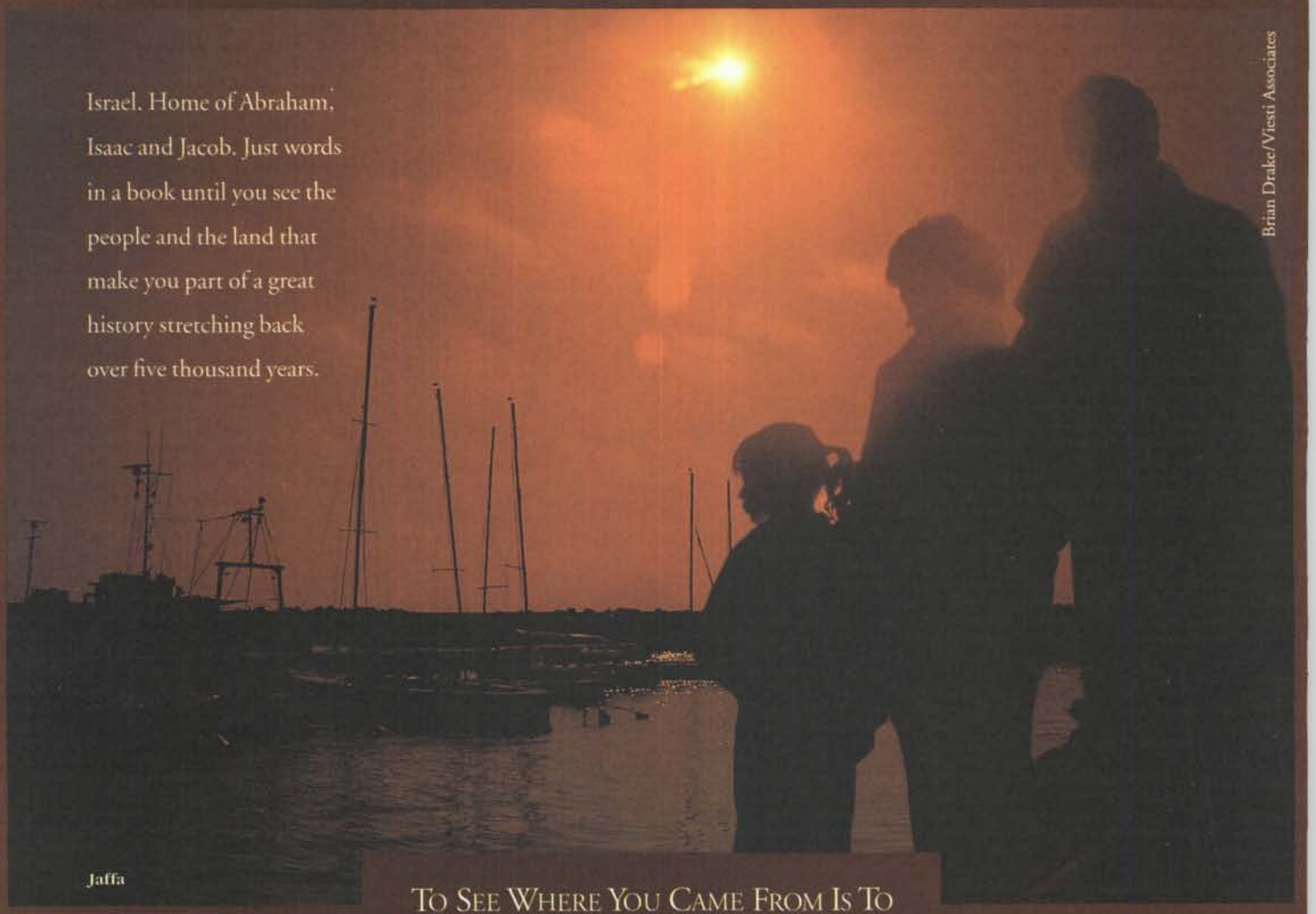
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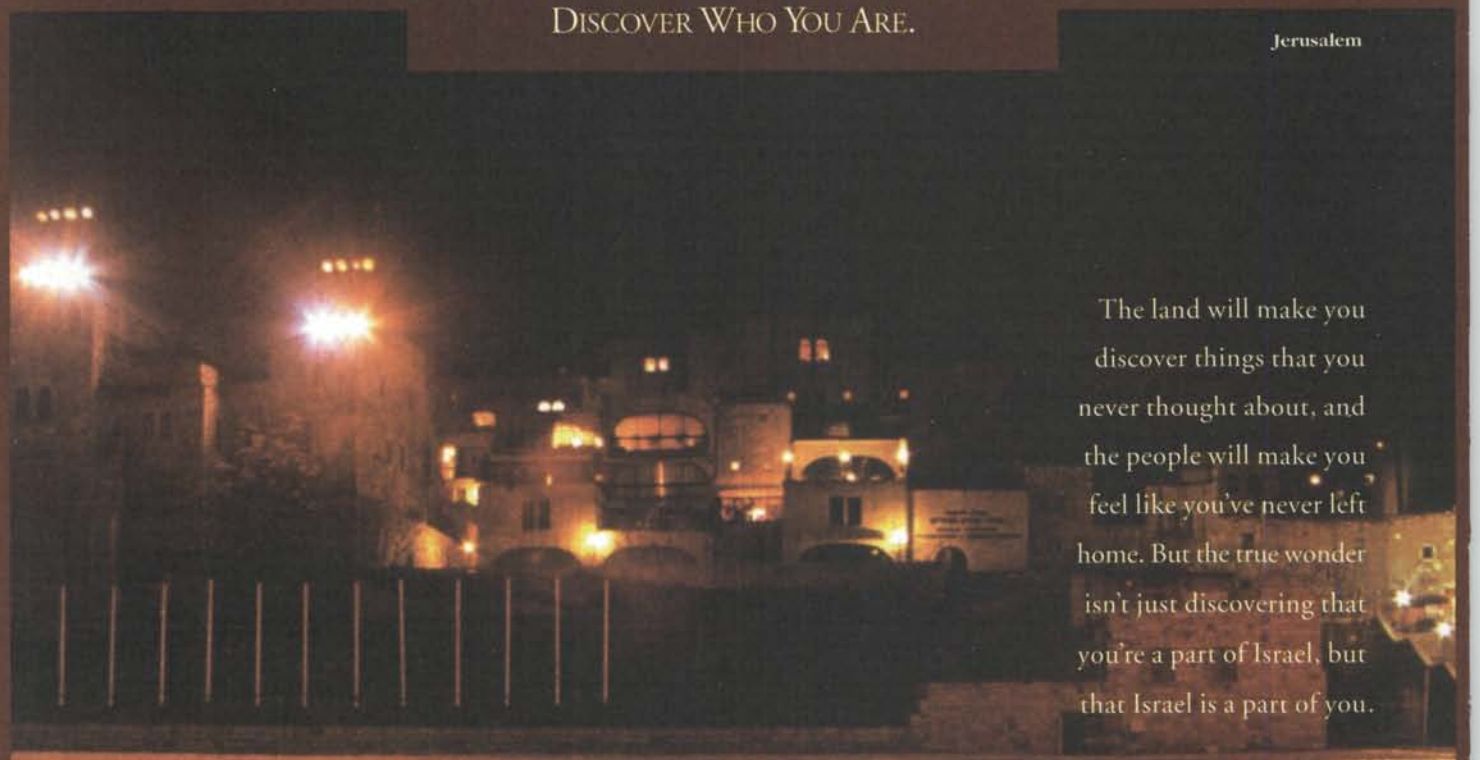
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